

The GUILTY MAN

FRANCOIS COPPÉE

RUTH · HELEN · DAVIS



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The
GUILTY MAN
(LE COUPABLE)

BY
FRANÇOIS COPPÉE

AUTHORIZED ENGLISH VERSION
BY
RUTH HELEN DAVIS



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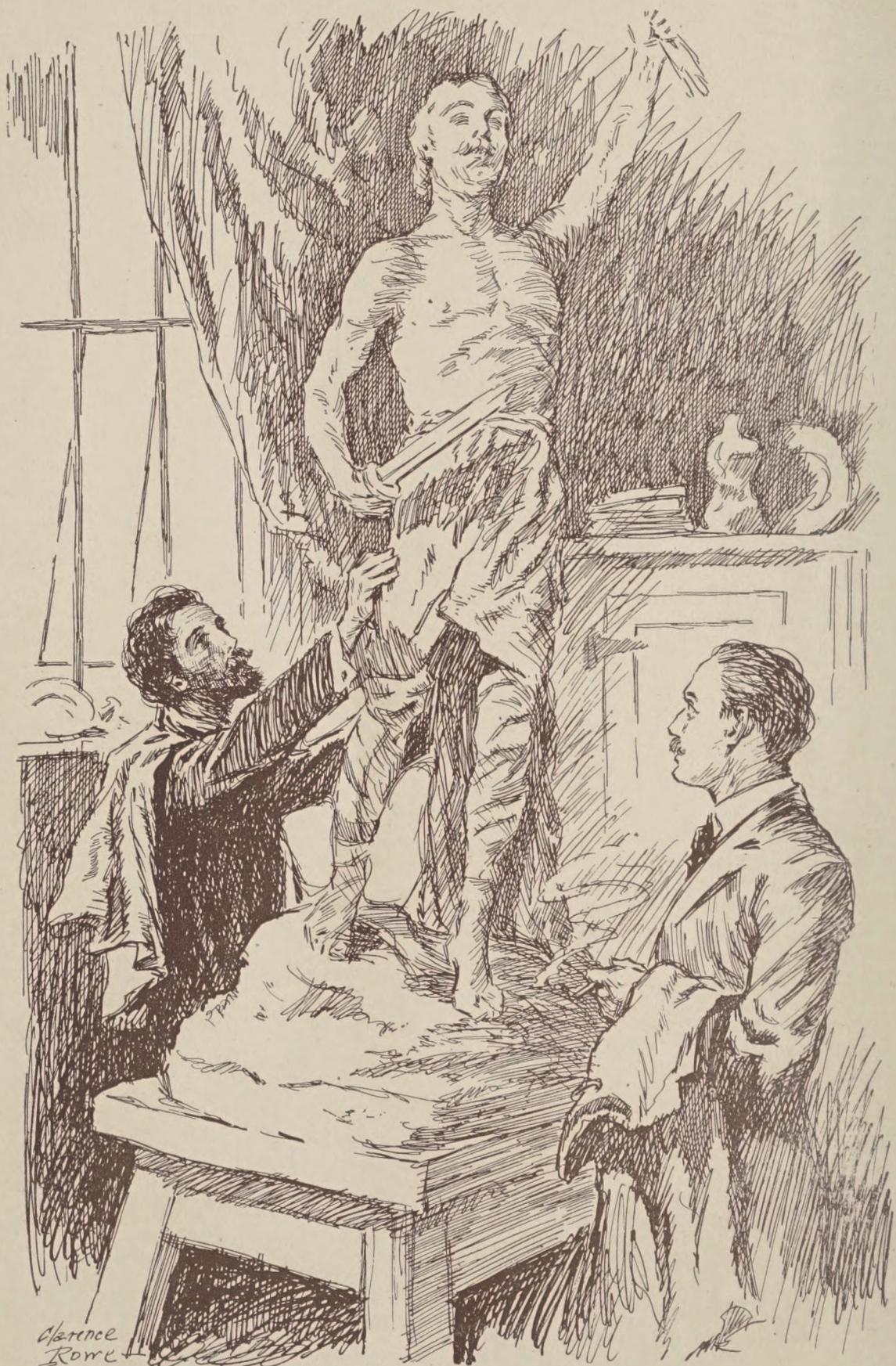
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THE GUILTY MAN

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THERE WAS AN EXPRESSION OF FRENZIED JOY EVEN IN THE POSE OF THE ARM.

Frontispiece. Page 45.

m.c.w.may.11-1911.

TO
MY DEAR MOTHER
IN APPRECIATION OF HER LOVE AND
ENCOURAGEMENT

R. H. D.

New York, February, 1911

INTRODUCTION

Were the heart the organ of speech we should have an universal language. Even as it is, its beats mark the rhythm of all emotional literature. An author who plays upon the heart-strings, purging the human passions, love and pity and terror, by arousing them and satisfying or allaying them, strengthening the moral fibre by giving it exercise, uplifting the imagination to a broad vision of humanity, and directing the will toward action in behalf of the oppressed, will not fail of devotees in other nations than his own. So it was with Charles Dickens, whose books have been translated into every civilized language, and who has been an inspiration to foreign authors no less than to those of the Anglo-Saxon world. In France, in particular, Dickens has found disciples among literary artists of equal rank with himself, Alphonse Daudet and François Coppée showing in certain of their best works the direct influence of the novelist whom Taine characterized as the great English painter and poet of humanity.

More than Daudet, Coppée deserves the title of the French Dickens. A fellow member of the French Academy, José de Heredia, calls him "the poet of the humble, painting with sincere emotion his profound sympathy for the sorrows, the miseries, and the sacrifices of the meek."

As an artist in fiction, says Heredia, "Coppée possesses pre-eminently the gift of presenting concrete fact rather than abstraction," and a "great grasp of character," enabling him "to show us the human heart and intellect in full play and activity"—both of which endowments were the supreme characteristics of the author of *Nicholas Nickleby* and *David Copperfield*.

The novel of Coppée wherein the qualities which distinguish Dickens are most clearly and effectively displayed is *Le Coupable*, published in 1897, and it is most fitting that the first English translation of it should appear when preparations are making to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Dickens.

No more significant tribute than this could be paid to the genius of him who first gave to fiction humanitarian purpose. *Le Coupable*, freely and forcibly rendered by the translator as *The Guilty Man*, is a story of a maimed victim of the maladjustment of our social machinery, and it will arouse in every good man or woman who reads it the desire to do his or her part, not only in alleviating the miseries of similar victims in real life, but also in preventing such maiming in the future—putting the social machine in proper gear, running to the divine rhythm of the Cosmos, the universe of order and beauty.

The reader of the story in the present English translation, which has been authorized by the owner of the French copyright, will miss nothing of its power in the original,

and will find that the loss of certain *nuances* of art which no translator of Coppée can exactly reproduce is compensated for by shadings of expression native to the genius of English literature, which evoke equivalent, even though not identical, æsthetic effects. In a few instances the translator has corrected what evidently were slips in the psychology of the story, suppressing, for example, the account of a theft by the little "culprit" prior to the one which Coppée comments upon as the first. In short, the purpose of the translator has been to efface the impression from the reader's mind that he is reading an alien book. For one, I can say that its effect has been as if I had come upon an hitherto unpublished story of Charles Dickens.

MARION MILLS MILLER.

The Dickens Fellowship,
New York.



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THE GUILTY MAN

CHAPTER I

FATHER AND SON

ATMOSPHERE and all weather conditions have a great influence on the development of character and temperament. The region of the Calvados is famous for its leaden, clouded sky, which is very depressing but not more so than was the colorless life that young Christian Lescuyer had led in the town of Caen in the heart of that district. He had just reached his twenty-second birthday, and so indelibly were his surroundings stamped on his mind that he did not know how to enjoy the occasional beautiful days which shone on his native town. It seemed as though he had never seen the sunshine, as though the rain had come down in torrents as long as he could remember.

The house in which he was born (and it is a

question whether or not the gift of existence had been a boon)—this house to which the word “home” could never be applied—was built by young Lescuyer’s grandfather toward the end of Louis XV’s reign. Of all the dismal houses on the aristocratic “Rue des Carmes”, this one was unquestionably the most dismal. The entire street, in fact, constituted the section where the best families had always lived, and it presented as a whole an appearance of gloom and sadness. There was but one sign of life and energy in the neighborhood: at the end of the little street called St. John, the white-bonneted, blue-bloused peasant throng gathered on market day, and there, too, Scandinavian sailors might frequently be seen unloading large bars of soap. But the “Rue des Carmes” would know nothing of this activity. It abominated the work of the people, their vulgar tumult, and kept its aristocratic windows tightly closed.

The interior of the Lescuyer house was quite in accord with its exterior: if possible, it was even more gloomy. The rooms breathed out an air of aloofness, and provincial avarice was apparent everywhere.

On five or six occasions during the year, Monsieur Lescuyer, père, entertained his colleagues at dinner. The courses were served warm, but were immediately frozen by the icy conversation of the host. In the room back of the dining-hall, where one was in danger of contracting a deadly inflammation of the lungs, the family portraits of the house of Lescuyer were hung. They had all been lawyers, for more than a century, and were pictured in robes and wigs. They cast a black look at you from the very depths of their oval frames, as if you were on the stand and they were about to submit you to a grilling cross-examination.

If you ascended to the first floor and entered the private study of Monsieur Lescuyer, the effect was even more depressing. There was a vast library filled with law books, from the in-folio collections of the "Customs of the Middle Ages" in their faded bindings, to the endless "Bulletin of Law." This mass of volumes and medley of jurisprudence and legal procedure brought to mind immediately the great difference between law and justice. What infinite trouble men have taken since the origin of society in order to fight against and stamp out, by

means of written rules, the inherent relics of barbarism in their own natures! One could not help reflecting that the old books with their ungilded bindings, which recorded punishments now obsolete and tortures long since abolished, gave evidence of tenets as unjust and meaningless as those of the modern code. Does not the latter, in a proceeding involving possibly four cents, overwhelm the defendant with an avalanche of stamped papers of such a confusing nature as to make him regret that the trial by cudgelling is not now enforced?

It was in this study, among all these mute printed witnesses of the powerlessness of the human family to show itself to be in the right in the simplest question, that Counsellor Lescuyer spent the greater part of his time. As he sat at his desk he was literally surrounded by a sea of briefs.

This exacting, upright, hard-working man, reflecting an unusually austere attitude toward life, unsympathetic, even brutal at times, had degenerated into a mere machine for the consideration of legal tracts. He was now, at the end of the year 1866, about to reach his fiftieth birthday. During his rather long career his advancement had been very slow, and he

had not received the decoration of the Legion of Honor.

His hard, cold face expressed pride and egotism. He was, in a word, the type of man who was born to preside at a revolutionary tribunal or take an active part in some abominable torture of the Inquisition.

And this was the man with whom young Lescuyer had spent his youth. He had been brought up in this dull house with his stern, relentless father, for whom he had a terrific respect, as his sole companion.

At the age of twenty-two, when he was about to submit to the faculty of Caen his thesis for entrance to the profession of his forbears, he had not one agreeable recollection of childhood or young manhood. No one had ever loved him. His mother died of milk fever a few days after his birth, and there was not even a picture of her in the house.

In moments of self-depreciation, Christian Lescuyer would call himself ungrateful because he did not love his father. But how could he have affection for a father whom he had feared ever since he could remember? He shuddered reminiscently as he thought of the terror that voice and look had in-

spired in him as a child. Why had he never jumped on his father's knee, why had he never kissed him?

When he had distinguished himself at school and longed for paternal praise, the most he ever received was a cold "That's good." How he had hungered for a word of encouragement! He was a docile child and had never resisted his father's authority: he feared him too much for that. If this poor, starved little soul could only have had the occasional word of tenderness which it craved!

The boy was naturally so timid and reserved that he had not been able to form one of those college friendships which are a blessing of youth. There was one young fellow, who was on a different social plane, to whom Christian felt himself drawn by a bond of sympathy. It was probably the similarity of their lonely lives which was the attraction. In scholarship, this lad was the very antithesis of Christian. Of small intellect and little application he had never attained a creditable standing in his classes, whereas the studious, brilliant mind of young Lescuyer had brought him to the foremost rank.

François Donadieu was an orphan, and Christian felt for him on that account. Everything about the

boy appealed to him. He admired the lad—an indolent, rebellious little gamin whose only success at school was in drawing, and whose greatest delight was in defying the instructors and then passing hideous caricatures of them around the class-room for general inspection.

It was clearly a case of the attraction of opposite types. Christian admired tremendously a spirit which the limitations of his nature did not permit him to imitate. He made advances to this imp of mischief, which François voluntarily accepted, for he had an affectionate disposition. The professors looked with great disfavor upon this friendship, but François was very proud of his intimacy with the head of the class, and it was only when Christian commenced to moralize and advise him about his studies that he would object.

"I hate Latin, I don't like the smell of ink, and I am only happy with a piece of charcoal in my hand," he would say. "I want to go to Paris and study color and form under a master, but what am I to do? I am a poor orphan without a sou."

"Have I ever told you about my father's sister in Paris?" he asked one day. "She is poor, too,—has

a small book shop on the Rue St. Jacques—and I spend all my vacation time with her. She loves me and is very good to me; but whenever I write to her that I dislike college and want to study art, the poor soul is frightened and begs me to finish my course here. If it were not for her, I'd run away from here to-morrow. But I know it would break her heart," he added, ruefully.

Christian's sad, quiet nature spared him those inner tempests which François had to fight. He was to follow the career of the Lescuyer family, the law. Ever since he was old enough to understand, his father had impressed that upon him. He was perfectly satisfied; he did not think of rebelling against family tradition, but he admired the courage of his fourteen-year-old companion who had chosen his own profession.

The friendship of the two boys was brought to an abrupt close, for François soon had an opportunity to leave the school which he so thoroughly detested: in fact, he had no choice in the matter. There was a great midnight revel in the dormitory one night, and the teacher who tried to quell the disturbance received a black eye as his just due for interference.

For this François was expelled, although it must be said to his credit that he was not the worst offender. He was delighted at the opportunity of returning to Paris. Christian was very lonesome for his companion, to whom he had become greatly attached, but he formed no other friendship during his course.

Small wonder that when Christian reached his majority he was extremely lonesome and introspective! The influences which had been brought to bear upon his childhood could have had no other effect. He made several brave attempts at boyish dissipation, but his allowance of five francs a week would not permit a continuance of these pleasures. On one occasion he got into debt for a small sum, and his father's attitude was so severe that he decided to resist all future temptation. In consequence he plunged himself the more deeply into his work, and long walks given up to silent reverie constituted his sole distraction.

He attended one dinner given by his father, and the frigidity was so intense that he was seized with despair at the prospect of a lifetime spent with such companions as his father's friends.

Counsellor Lescuyer took no part in the social activity of Caen, but he was most punctilious about one fortnightly visit, and insisted that his son accompany him. He had a deep motive for calling so regularly on Madame Leger-Taburet, who owned the most beautiful house on the "Rue des Carmes." She was a widow and lived alone with her niece, who would some day inherit her aunt's large fortune. The old lady was the talk of the neighborhood, and her niggardliness was proverbial. Whenever her name was mentioned some one would invariably tell the celebrated grape story. She was very proud of her grape arbor and made it a habit to ask: "Have you ripe grapes in your garden?" "No," was the usual reply. That was her cue to answer, as if it were a personal triumph: "Oh, I have!"—but she was never known to offer any to her visitors. One day she asked the usual question, when two old maid sisters were visiting her. They gave the stereotyped answer, and she asked to be excused for a few minutes. They saw her go into the garden and when she returned she handed each of them two grapes. Her attempted generosity provided fresh material for the gossips, who made good use of this story.

This was the inspiring visit which Christian had to live through every third Sunday, and he accepted it along with the rest of his monotonous existence as though it had to be. Occasionally he exchanged a few words with the sixteen-year-old niece, whose repressed bringing up had made her very timid and retiring. She was not at all pretty and she dressed like a perfect frump, but her face was agreeable and she had a pleasant smile.

As Lescuyer, *père et fils*, were walking home after one of these enlivening visits, the father told his son the reason for his regularity. "Do you know," said the counsellor, "that Miss Camille will inherit 18,000 francs? Her aunt is determined that she shall marry a lawyer. Of course, it is well known that the Chief Justice thinks his son will win her, but the young man is a drunkard and has failed in his third examination to enter the law. I am sure that you will be the favored suitor, and I want you to commence your attentions to Miss Camille as soon as you have finished your work at college."

This evidence of interest on his father's part pleased Christian very much, and his barren soul treasured up this conversation for years. The dowry

was of secondary importance to him, but his colorless life seemed brightened by the possibility of an attachment. He often dreamed now of hours spent with his fiancée under the famous trellis, where he hoped they would be left alone.

These love dreams came to an abrupt end. Shortly after the conversation which raised Christian's hopes to a high emotional plane, his father made a plan for him which resulted in a complete change of outlook. The counsellor summoned Christian to his office one day and the boy entered in fear and trembling. Never had his father's face seemed more set and relentless.

"My son," he began in a frigid tone, "I have decided on a very serious course for you. I want you to earn the degree of Doctor of Laws, as I have, and I am therefore going to send you to Paris to accomplish this purpose. You will have to work very diligently for two years. I realize all the dangers to which your weak nature will be subjected in a large city, but I am willing to risk them for the benefit of the legal training you will receive. I shall make due allowance for a few dissipations, but shall be absolutely unforgiving if you misuse your liberty."

"I have not forgotten our conversation of the other day," he continued, "and shall keep on visiting the aunt and niece very regularly, after you have gone. By the time you return, I shall have arranged the entire matter and then you will marry Miss Camille and receive the dowry. You will find this indispensable in your career.

"We shall begin our good-bye visits to-morrow. You will reach Paris in time to matriculate: the course begins on the third of November. I shall give you letters of introduction to my friends," he said with visible pride. "I want you to become friendly with worthy Monsieur Lherbager, who will be of service to you. You will cultivate the acquaintance of only such people as will further your interests.

"Despite the temptations of the Latin Quarter, you will live there because it is near the college. Your allowance will be 250 francs a month. I got along on much less. Get ready at once to leave, and above all don't thank me. I expect you to carry out to the letter all the valuable advice I have given you."

Monsieur Lescuyer broke the news of freedom, of

the glorious possibility of a taste of liberty, as if he were reading his son's death warrant. Not once during the entire conversation did his face light up.

Christian reeled as he left his father's office. The idea was too new: he could not grasp it. He—to be free? It was impossible. He—was going to live in Paris. He—was to see the Latin Quarter, which fired the imagination of all students. They spoke of it as though it were the "Promised Land," and now he was to live there; and above all, he was to be his own master,—his own master: to have a latch key in his pocket. He—was to have money to spend without giving an account of every sou.

He thought again of his father's manner as he told him the glorious news. How could he have been so cold? His indifference was like that of a jailer who releases a prisoner, one of many, in whom he has no interest. If he had only shown one sign of tenderness, one vestige of emotion! It seemed foreordained that confidence and affection should not exist between these two beings, who should have been so dear to each other. The boy felt that he was going to leave his father's house with the joy which a dog would feel if he were to have his leash

removed, at the same time his instinct telling him that sooner or later he would be under the tyranny of his master again. How he wished that it might have been otherwise, but even in his prospect of new-found freedom he knew that he could think of his father only with fear.

The few days which he spent at home before his departure seemed everlasting. He was nervous and restless, but felt absolutely no regret at leaving. And why should he have felt it? He had been bored ever since he could remember in the dull town and duller home of his birth.

The time came for him to bid Camille and her aunt good-bye. It was then that he realized how his feelings had changed in so short a time. He was amazed to find that he could not now abide the thought of marrying Camille; she seemed positively ugly to him, and above all she was only a child: would she ever be womanly? He dismissed the matter from his mind, refusing to permit a vague possibility of the remote future to disturb his present peace of mind.

At last—the day arrived. One of the proverbial disagreeable, cloudy days to which he had grown

accustomed. His father came to the station to see him off, but even at the last moment did not unbend. Christian was conscious of a wonderful sense of freedom as the train pulled out, and then he reproached himself for having a stone in the place where his heart ought to be. Had he no feeling for the father whom he was leaving, no longing for his home?

As he gazed from the train window, fantastic shapes seemed to mock him. He had an idea that the clouds took the form of the masks on the façade of his father's house and that they followed him intently.

CHAPTER II

IN THE LATIN QUARTER

THE Hotel De la Plata, on the Rue Racine, was patronized principally by students who came from Lower Normandy and by South American youths from Argentine. Here a table d'hôte dinner was served which could not be excelled anywhere in the Latin Quarter. Every evening about a dozen young fellows were to be found there, seated around the table. The linen was seldom clean, but this uncleanness did not trouble the diners in the least. Most of the chaps were from Normandy, where customs and living conditions are such as to have a quieting effect on temperament. These boys did not indulge in many excesses, but the same could not be said of the young South Americans, whose conduct often caused a scandal. They were well known for their frequent trips to the "Mont de Piété."

If early in the morning an unkempt girl should

lean over the balustrade and call for two cups of chocolate to be sent to Room No. 17, one might be quite sure that a citizen of Buenos Ayres occupied that room. But despite the tremendous differences in taste and ideas, the boys from Normandy and those from South America lived together, at this hotel, in a spirit of friendship and good fellowship.

It was about six o'clock in the evening when Christian Lescuyer reached Paris. The cabby, in answer to his question as to where he could find a good hotel, drove him to the De La Plata. The porter, with an eye to business, showed him a room on the first floor, which he thought proper for a traveller with two trunks. As he opened the door he turned to Lescuyer and said:—

“This is our best room, sir.”

The room was hideous. Christian was disgusted with its appearance, but this impression did not last long. The maid came to change the soiled quilt and light the gas. After he had unpacked a few of his belongings, the place took on a more livable air, and as he looked around he breathed a deep sigh of relief and satisfaction.

"I am at home, this is mine alone!" he cried aloud.

Then he raised the shade and looked out into the street. Directly opposite was a barber shop, where four or five young fellows were being shaved. Christian looked at them and wondered whether they were getting ready for a ball or theatre that night, and how long it would be before he too would be enjoying all the pleasures of Paris. The sense of freedom thrilled him again, and he determined to make the utmost use of his new-found liberty.

The sound of a bell interrupted his train of thought. It reminded him that he was hungry, and he went down to the dining-room, where a crowd of young students was already seated.

The sight of all these strange faces made him very timid, and he sat down modestly at the only vacant place. The waiter had shown him the special attention of arranging his napkin in the form of a bishop's mitre. He felt miserably self-conscious, when all at once he heard some one exclaim:—

"By Jove, it's Lescuyer!"

He looked up startled, and slowly the identity of his unknown friend dawned upon him. He recognized him as one of his fellow-students from Caen.

Yes, surely it was Mulot, the son of a very rich cattle dealer.

The boys had never been very friendly, but Mulot was the type of man who called everyone "friend" in his easy, vulgar way, and Lescuyer, glad to have found someone he knew, permitted the intimacy.

"Have you come to take your degree?" asked Mulot, "and is this your first visit to Paris? Cheer up, we'll show you all the sights in the Quarter."

The ice was broken, the new comer was presented to all the company, and the conversation became very animated. It was on a par with the meal. If it had been less novel to Christian, he would have found it coarse and vulgar, but he gave himself up to the enjoyment of the moment, and felt pleased that he was one of the party.

Some one ordered champagne and, such as it was, it increased the hilarity. Imitations were suggested and everyone had to do a turn. Each was greeted with a fresh burst of enthusiasm, but a youth of Saint Lo was the hit of the evening. He turned his back to the audience and gave a perfect reproduction of the sound of a planing machine. That was indeed perfection!

After the coffee had been served, Mulot, who was the master of ceremonies, proposed that they go for a walk. That was only a cue for someone else to suggest a good glass of beer at a café near by, to which he would take the party. The place was well known as a meeting place for men of literary ability. New poems of aspiring writers were read every night, and one always had a good time there.

Of course the beer was not excellent, but at least it had an odor of hops, and Christian Lescuyer thought it quite the best he had ever tasted. For him it was the elixir of freedom. All at once Mulot looked at his watch.

“Boys, it’s after eleven o’clock, and I have a rendez-vous with Clarisse for half-past ten at Léonie’s wine shop.”

This suggestion was again sufficient, and the whole crowd proceeded to go to the next place on the list for a whiskey. In 1868 wine shops kept by women had not come into general popularity. Later they became the rage. This particular tavern was kept by Léonie, who was once known as the beauty of the Quarter. Now she was vulgar and showed not a visible trace of her former good looks. It was con-

sidered quite “en règle” for everyone to drink more than his capacity, and it was only a prig who was not tipsy by quarter after twelve.

Thither went the guests of the La Plata. They entered the wine shop in Indian file and were met at the door by Mulot’s mistress, who was enraged because he had kept her waiting so long. He succeeded in pacifying her, so that by the time the whiskey was served, everyone was in high spirits. Then someone ordered beer for all, and the surprise of the evening was a new kind of punch.

After this, Christian, who had never taken a drop before in his entire lifetime, felt that his ideas were becoming badly confused. He retained a dim recollection of being forcibly shown the door, with the rest of his companions, at a quarter past midnight. In the midst of the jollity, he had vaguely heard the coarse voice of Léonie saying—

“Out with you, you’ve all had enough.”

When he came out into the night air his limbs refused to move, and he could not walk a step without the help of two of his companions. Despite his objections and the defiance he hurled at the boys, they knew the symptoms, and kept on leading him.

In subconsciousness he seemed aware of the carryings on during the walk home. The deserted street, the wild imitations of animals, the tearing of one another's clothes, and the carrying of a sign from an orphans' home to the opposite building, "Select School for Young Ladies." His final impression was of falling up the stairs, and of several unsuccessful attempts to find the keyhole—and then he remembered no more.

Next morning, he awoke with the feeling that he had been the toy of a cyclone, again that he had been rolling and pitching on a boat in the teeth of a gale. He became conscious of a dull, burning sensation at the base of his brain and a brassy taste in his mouth, and then he began to wonder why his pillow was on the floor and why he had gone to bed without even having removed his shoes. This night of riot and debauchery was his initiation to the Latin Quarter.

CHAPTER III

FRANCOIS AND HELOISE

JUST a week after this delightful dissipation (of which Lescuyer was a bit ashamed) he matriculated at the Law School. A student by nature, he devoted himself zealously to his new work, and, for additional training, spent several hours a day under the supervision of his father's friend, Monsieur Malherbes. He continued to spend his evenings with his new associates, but soon found their pleasures uninteresting and vulgar.

After dinner, the Norman clique induced Christian to join them at *their* café, where each one had his own pipe, left on a long rack. Their topics of conversation were always coarse and trifling. There were discussions as to the real or supposed fortune of their country friends in town, conjectures about their own outlook in their chosen profession, and, most important of all, about the size of the dowries



IT WAS THEN THAT HE REALIZED HOW HIS FEELINGS HAD CHANGED.

they might hope for to pay the cost of their studies.

These repetitions wearied and disgusted Christian, and he never entered into them. He maintained a dull silence. Clarisse, the vulgar mistress of Mulot, was usually his table neighbor, and she spent the time in studying the illustrated magazines, while her lover played his game of billiards. These were indeed empty, heavy, tiring hours. Occasionally the stupid conversation was interrupted by the thick voice of Mulot, crying out:—

“Hurrah, this is great,—a regular fluke!”

There was another crowd of students at this tavern, whom Christian judged to be very brilliant and pretentious. On one or two occasions they invited him to join them . . . they were indeed high livers! The young law student was presented, while with them, to a very beautiful young woman, whom he escorted home one evening, but her diction was so poor that Christian became completely disillusioned when she told him of an experience of the previous summer. She had been a *fille de service* at a fashionable watering-place, from which she had been dismissed on a suspicion of theft. Throughout her entire lifetime she would

never cease regretting that she had not accepted the fervid love of the pedicure who had been so very much in earnest.

The shy, sensitive nature of the young student finally revolted at this environment, and he found himself wondering whether, outside of the boundaries of the Latin Quarter, there were not another Paris which accorded with the ideal existing in the minds of the young devotees of Balzac who were gifted with pregnant imaginations. It seemed as remote to him as the impenetrable wilds marked on the map *Hic sunt leones*.

Nevertheless, he tried to increase his circle of acquaintance by presenting the letters of introduction given him by his father. Of what benefit? They only served to bring him several invitations to dismal evenings which were indelibly connected in his mind with very homely women and lack of refreshments. Poor Christian was reminded, with a shudder, of the frigid facial expressions and the stiff cravats for which he had not lost his childish terror. As to the old attorney to the Court of Paris, the very worthy Monsieur L—— (as his father spoke of him), he looked exactly like a death's head with

white whiskers. Christian dined with him *en famille* and carried away the impression of an occasion as joyous as the last meal of the bivouac of the Grand Army, on the outskirts of the Beresina. He was ill at ease with the austere Madame L—, whose silence was oppressive, and he was conscious of a violent dislike for the two sly sons of the house, who scarcely raised their eyes from their plates and spoke only of the sermons preached by a Jesuit minister during Advent.

Christian's condition was truly a lonely, deplorable one! His anticipation and the realization of freedom and life in Paris were diametrically opposed. He was completely discouraged by his unfortunate attempt to go into society; disgusted with his Norman associates, who were so vulgar; out of sympathy with his exotic companions, who were posers. The result of this condition of mind was the usual one: he turned to his work for distraction, and applied himself so aptly to it that he won the approval of his masters.

Despite his application, he was the victim of an inner restlessness which he could not satisfy. In a word, he was completely bored, his heart being

empty, and his senses demanding gratification. In desperation he walked out under the chestnut trees of the Luxembourg, conscious of melancholy—the same unfulfilled desires which he had known in his narrow life in Caen.

The lovely spring in Paris, with its lilac-scented air, served only to increase the depression of the lonely student. He asked himself constantly and with pardonable bitterness what use he had made of his long-hoped-for liberty. A distaste for study took hold of him, and a habit of introspection, the unfailing sign of nervous exhaustion, replaced it. His evenings were now spent in long walks through the dusty suburbs of Paris.

One afternoon, about four o'clock, as Christian was returning from his walk, he sauntered mechanically to the *Place de l'Observatoire* and joined the other loiterers, who had formed a circle around a foreigner performing athletic feats for their amusement.

The man arrested the attention of all the on-lookers. In his sweater of dirty white and tiger-skin breeches, with a bracelet of black leather on his right arm, he was indeed a handsome animal.

At just the moment when Christian joined the crowd, the athlete was about to raise a weight of one hundred kilos on his outstretched arm, to the accompaniment of a dilapidated organ which ground out a polka long years out of date.

Someone in the crowd standing behind Christian exclaimed:

"That's splendid; see the muscles of his forearm, that's the way to do it."

Christian turned to see the speaker, and was attracted by a jolly-looking young fellow wearing a peculiar-looking hat and a vest spotted and stained with loam. His blond beard and red hair seemed to sparkle in the sunlight.

"Great Scott," said the youth, "there's little Christian! Is it possible! Don't you know me? Donadieu? François Donadieu, your school chum at Caen?"

As Christian recognized him, his heart began to throb. In the flash of an instant, he recalled his happiest recollection, the only friendship of his youth.

"François, my dear friend," said he, extending both his hands.

Attention! the performing Hercules was going to raise the "200" weight again. "Just a second, my little school friend," said François, "only see that biceps! What a shoulder the fellow has—his physique is heroic—what a splendid model he would be for my new statue! Hurrah, there, Samson!"

The artist proved his enthusiasm by throwing a handful of change to the athlete, who, now that his *pièce de résistance* had been executed, stood posing for the gallery.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you," he said.

Donadieu passed his arm affectionately through Christian's, and hurried along with him.

"How strangely people meet again after a number of years! Here is the little Christian, teacher's pet, who tried so hard to make a student of me, a digger of Greek roots. You see, dear old boy, that would never have done. I have followed the advice of Gavarni, 'You are not fitted for anything—be an artist.' Yes, my boy, I am a sculptor, pupil of Carpeaux. My master is a severe critic, and amazed me the other day when he pronounced my uncompleted statue excellent. That's what makes a fellow feel like working, I tell you."

"But I am ashamed of my egotism, talking only of myself. Tell me your plans. How long will you be in Paris?"

"For two years at least," answered Christian. "I am working for my degree."

"That's great; we shall be pals again as we were in school days. Are you free this evening?"

"Yes."

"Then let's make an appointment," said Dona-dieu enthusiastically.

"Come and see my *Homme au Trophée*, my 'birch-rod' for the Salon. My studio is only fifteen minutes' walk from here. It is not very pretentious, but it's the best I can afford and I'm satisfied. Very frequently I have to do several days' work to make both ends meet,—to pay my rent and my models. I make clocks and bronze candelabra to suit the taste of the peasants. But what's the difference? I have my corner in which I work, and who knows—? Maybe some day I shall receive a commission to model the bust of the President, and then I shall give dinners with truffles under the napkins, butlers with white gloves and all the other evidences of luxury. Who knows? I was telling myself that this

morning, when I sat down to my four sous' worth of Italian cheese.

"But, my dear Christian, I am glad to see you again—"

Christian felt his depression the more keenly on account of Donadieu's lightheartedness.

"Tell me all about your life since you left school," said Christian.

"Things have been going pretty badly with me since the death of my aunt. She died when I was seventeen and left me, a gamin of the streets of Paris, with no inheritance but a few old books.

"That was interesting, wasn't it?" he continued, bursting into a hearty laugh. "Can you imagine my living for more than six months on the proceeds of the sale of the old books? I named my clothes after the authors to whose works I owed the covering of my body. I had a soft hat, which I called my 'Marquis de Foudras,' a pair of shoes, the 'Mysteries of Paris.' My reserve stock was a complete edition of Alexandre Dumas. I translated 'Monte Cristo' and the 'Three Musketeers' in my own mind into little rolls, sausages and bits of cheese."

"Here is my corner," said Donadieu, "to the right. Here we are." A sign which read "Leflo—Hot milk supplied night and morning," attracted the attention of Christian.

"This is my *studio*," exclaimed the artist, with mock gravity.

Christian's quick eye took in the details of his friend's quarters: several small plaster figures on a plank, three straw footstools, an iron stove with a long bent pipe, and on the sculptor's bench a huge figure covered with damp cloths. And that was all. The cold northern light, which came through a large aperture in the ceiling, seemed to emphasize the squalor and misery of the scene.

"You live here?" queried Christian, not without a touch of compassion.

"I even sleep here," answered Donadieu gayly, as he pointed to a pallet of straw, partly hidden by a ragged screen. "I prepared you for a lack of luxury. But don't pity me. I am about to break a 100-franc note, which I earned at a bronze factory last week, and to-morrow I shall be able to continue working on my statue which pleased the master. And, my little Christian, I invite you to be my

guest at dinner to-night," continued Donadieu, unable to restrain his high spirits.

"A friend of mine will join us; she is only a little seamstress, but she looks just like Titian's mistress, whose picture hangs in the Salon Carré. One of us is as poor as the other, so we have every right, haven't we, without conceit, to think we are in love just for love's sake?"

"To devote oneself to a profession one truly enjoys, to adore a sweet young woman with the hope that your love will last forever, and to be young in spirit, is all the happiness a mortal can ask."

"If I live and if I make a success of my work, I suppose I shall repeat over and over again like a parrot, 'Those were the good old days——'

"But do sit down. I want to uncover my creation and hear your opinion of it."

The quick agile hands of the artist removed the covering, and the statue of gray wet plaster was disclosed. It was the figure of a barbarian, a Gaul or a Samnite, the torso nude. In his outstretched right hand he held a heavy trophy of eagles and fasces wrested from his mighty foes, the Romans. There

was an expression of frenzied joy to be read even in the pose of the arm.

Christian stood before the mighty figure, thrilled to trembling with the emotion caused by its power. This one and only magnificent work of art stood triumphant in its impoverished environment, casting over all the details of its miserable surroundings an almost holy light, which filled the senses of the spectator with an impression of the severe beauty of a barbaric temple.

"Inspiring, magnificent!" said Christian, overcome.

Donadieu stood a few feet from the statue, with his gaze riveted upon it, an anxious frown on his forehead. His fingers were nervously rolling a cigarette.

"Well, it is not so bad, my 'birch-rod' for the Academy—but I am not quite satisfied, because my model is too old a man. I want to ask that athlete whom we saw in the street to come here to pose for me. The arm is too flabby to bring out my meaning. All the muscles must cry 'Victory.' "

At this moment, the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of a young girl of twenty years, a bit

stout for her age, but as fair as the sun's rays, and despite her poor clothes as fresh as the bunch of pansies in her hand. She came in without knocking. A beautiful smile lit up her face.

"My dear little comrade," exclaimed Donadieu, kissing her affectionately on both cheeks. "Héloise, this is my friend Christian. We have known each other since our knickerbocker days. You know, dearie, I am going to break the 100-franc note and take you both out to dinner."

"Oh, I am so glad, my little lord," said the girl, with a charming laugh infectious with its joy and good nature. "Our dessert will be a surprise, but you must have your favorite *omelette aux confitures*.

"But here, dearie, you see I have been thinking of you," she added, handing him a small package.

"What a pretty tie! Thank you, darling," he said, kissing her again. As he took off his jacket to try the new effect, she said:

"Oh, see there, your sleeve is torn again. Give it to me, I'll sew it for you."

She quickly removed her gloves and hat, seated herself, threaded her needle, and began to sew,

while Donadieu replaced the cloths on his statue.

Christian underwent a great emotional change as he watched with envy this simple little scene so expressive of companionship and love.

"These two beautiful free beings," he mused, "poor, it's true, but wonderfully happy." How completely they were enjoying their youth and how they loved each other! Every second they exchanged glances, and their smile spoke volumes of the love which they felt.

The three went out to dine at the *Moulin des Vierges*. After coffee, the two friends discussed their early days at great length. One anecdote suggested another, and so it was quite late before Christian said good-night to Héloïse and François, at the door of the former's lodging-house.

As he left them, he was conscious of a regret at meeting François again, and of a disapproval of his mode of life, and yet these emotions were battling against an impulse and a hope that he too would meet a young girl who would be as devoted to him as was Héloïse to her *petit Dieu*.

Two days later the young student repaid his obligation by inviting François and Héloïse to dine with

him at the restaurant Magny. The simple little girl of the Paris suburbs was quite overwhelmed by the splendor of her surroundings. Velvet curtains, gold frescoes, and bouillon in cups were a new experience for her.

After that, Christian visited the studio every day and wondered how he had ever got along before he met François. He was attracted by the charm of bohemianism, which was to him as yet forbidden fruit. He carried his own trouble and the pardonable curiosity of a chaste young man into this poor quarter where art and love flourished.

One day, after the young athlete (who now came to pose for the statue) had left, Christian was seized with a desire to have all his doubts cleared up. François stood in a reverie before his completed work, and suddenly Christian, with the brusqueness that is characteristic of timidity, exclaimed:

“How happy you are, my dear friend, in having found so charming a mistress. May I ask if this is your first affair?”

The sculptor raised his shoulders and looked Christian straight in the eye.

"What do you take me for?" he answered with suppressed excitement in his voice. "Do you think I am one to ruin young girls? God forbid! I haven't the right to preach morality, but purity is sacred to me,—forbidden ground, my friend. As to Héloïse, she confessed to me the misery of her unfortunate past. I am trying to make her forget her horrible childhood in companionship with one who loves her and whom she loves devotedly. And that is the whole story."

"Then your friendship is altogether serious?" answered Christian, showing the prudence of the country-bred.

"Who can tell?" replied the artist. "We are very poor, she and I,—too poor to give a thought to the future. As soon as I have enough money to buy furniture and pay for a small apartment we shall live like husband and wife, and later we may marry. After we have gone along that way for several years and understand each other thoroughly, then—why not?"

This lack of prejudice, and broad outlook on life, impressed Christian tremendously. Nevertheless, all his education and, in addition, a delicacy and

natural reserve protested against the ideas of his friend. By a rapid play of the imagination he saw himself happy with a companion of whose love he was sure, and immediately there arose before his mental vision the austere figure of his father. The old man stood before him, trembling with uncontrollable rage, dismissed the girl, and insisted upon Christian's return to Caen.

Overcome with fear, realizing that under such circumstances he would give in and obey without resistance the demands of his father, he answered finally, as he thought, the "why not?" of Donadieu.

"Yes, yes," he said, "you are altogether free. You have no family."

And that day, Christian Lescuyer, despite the desire for happiness that gnawed at his heart, permitted his provincialism to gain its point, so terrified was he by the thought of seeking such companionship as François enjoyed.

Eight days later, his newly awakened nature asserted itself.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIAN AND PERRINETTE

THE meeting occurred, under the most commonplace circumstances, one evening when Christian Les-cuyer had gone to the café with his Norman acquaintances. Mulot had just made a crack shot at billiards, when his Clarisse came in with a friend.

Was she pretty? That depended on one's taste. She certainly did not appeal to the coarse peasants, who admired large women of gross features and high color. But this little brunette, with her refined profile, pale coloring and simple head-dress attracted Christian immediately. He thought she suggested a graceful swallow, in her plain black attire.

Mulot was too excited at his success in the game to pay any attention to the two girls, so Christian entertained them and offered them refreshments.

Between the serving of the three sodas which she ordered, Clarisse did not attempt to make conversation general, but described in detail to the other girl a new bodice which she had seen.

"It's beautifully trimmed with ribbons, my dear,—very fetching," she said. She was enjoying herself in anticipation of her own appearance in this new creation.

The brunette had more tact and felt the one-sidedness of the conversation.

"What town are you from?" she asked Christian by way of a change of topic.

The question was not a keen one, but it served its own purpose. The young student realized the girl's attempt to be polite, and her soft, sweet voice was agreeable to him.

Then he asked her where she lived and quite naïvely she told him about herself. She was a Parisienne, an orphan, and supported herself by selling flowers. Her name was Perrinette Forgeat, and she was twenty-two years old. All this was said in a quiet, gentle manner, with no sign of coquetry or evidence of trying to create an impression.

Clarisse was full of the idea of the new style and made several attempts to continue her description of it.

"You know, my dear, it has a military cut, like the one the Empress has on, in her latest photograph."

Perrinette listened inattentively, but Clarisse was convinced that there are only two topics which can interest a woman: fashion and love. The former did not appeal to Perrinette in the least at present, but it was quite evident that the young student attracted her.

Clarisse was not at all offended; on the contrary, she realized with the unfailing instinct of her sex that these two young people were irresistibly drawn to each other. She felt that she was quite as great a matchmaker as the dowager Duchess of Branlant, of whose success in that line she had read in the newspapers.

"Well, friends," she said, "it is after eleven o'clock. I know Mulot, he won't give up his game of billiards until the proprietor turns out the lights. Monsieur Christian, will you be kind enough to escort Perrinette home?"

"Indeed, I shall be glad to, if she will permit me," he replied.

"I shall be very grateful to you,—I live in a deserted neighborhood," said Perrinette.

He arose eagerly and she put on her gloves. She kept her eyes lowered modestly, but, despite the re-

serve of Christian and Perrinette, Clarisse wore a knowing smile, and when they left the café together she said to herself:

"Those dear little children,—I scent love in the air."

The lodging-house of Perrinette was not in reality so far away, but the young couple walked very slowly. They were so happy, sauntering along arm in arm on this warm June night. They thoroughly enjoyed their simple conversation, but we shall not repeat it. Firstly it would have no interest for us, and secondly, it was meant for their ears only. What is of so much importance to those in love often seems very tame to a disinterested outsider.

If Perrinette's first question as to his ambition thrilled Christian, it was only because she looked up at him with an expression which spoke volumes, and if his answer stirred her, it was because Christian's voice expressed a greater emotion than the ordinary reply could otherwise have caused.

What did they tell each other? The ears of the stars must indeed have been tired of hearing the same old story, which thousands of lovers had repeated since the beginning of time. Perrinette and

Christian became so thoroughly absorbed that they lost their way. When they reached the Panthéon, they walked around and around the large monument. What were they saying now? The tone of the conversation had certainly become more intimate and tender, for Christian's arm was now around the girl's waist. Their love-making became more ardent, and before they parted Christian had made a proposal to the girl which she accepted.

And now he was to know life as his friend François lived it! Did he love the girl? Yes, with all the ardor of a repressed nature long accustomed to the most severe inhibition. He was devoid of sensuality, and loved her tenderly. He found her so refreshing,—ignorant yet not stupid, and having retained a quiet modesty despite her heedless life.

Did he love her? He told her so in all good faith and meant it. He knew how to whisper love words sincere and sweet into a very receptive ear. The girl's heart responded.

Her state of mind was rather different from his. She loved him devotedly, more than she had cared for any one of her other six lovers, with whom she had wasted her youth. He was so gentle, so con-

siderate, she would not have deceived him, even to acquire her dearest wish, an *armoire à glâce* (wardrobe with a glass door). However, experience had robbed her of all illusion: she realized fully that these happy hours could not last forever. She foresaw the possibility of separation, without being depressed by it in advance. She was possessed of the reckless wisdom of an elementary intelligence. Of course, she loved Christian, with all the warmth of which she was capable. When her co-workers saw her smile quietly and asked, "What are you thinking about?" she answered, "Nothing," but her thoughts were of him.

However, what worth is attached to an emotion which has no certainty, not even the hope of continuance?

Christian and Perrinette spent all their evenings together, and on Sunday they invariably went out into the suburbs of Paris, sometimes alone, sometimes with François and Héloïse. The two women became very friendly. Héloïse, big and stout, felt a certain confidence in her position and took a motherly interest in the delicate frail little Perrinette. The party of four enjoyed their outings immensely, spending

the time either in a hired canoe near the lovely weeping willow trees of Meudon or taking long walks in the fields, where the girls gathered wild flowers. At night, they returned to the city, when the peasants were singing their vespers. At the station there was invariably a scramble to get an outside place, which put everyone in good humor.

The little unsophisticated country boy, the son of the austere Monsieur Lescuyer, had become completely emancipated.

Still he could not be accused of indiscretion. Perinne was a girl who understood her position, like thousands of other girls in Paris similarly placed. She was well dressed and well fed. What more could she ask? She went to her work every morning. He had time to study and applied himself with energy. She was not an expensive luxury, nor was she in any way troublesome. Once in a while, nevertheless, when Christian thought of his mode of life and that his father might come to know of it, a terror seized hold of this boy who had been brought up in an atmosphere of fear. He trembled as in imagination he saw himself a little child again and felt that his father might come in some morning to de-

nounce him. He could almost see the stiff white collar and the hard, relentless expression on the stern face.

Childishly, he had told Donadieu of this haunting fear, and Donadieu had made all manner of fun of him.

"On my word, there's Papa," cried François one evening when the four friends were seated at a café on the boulevard Saint Michel.

The three had a hearty laugh at Christian's expense, while he looked around terror-stricken—at an austere looking man who was not his father.

Spring with all its pleasant days was passing quickly, soon summer would be here and that meant vacation for the young student. He was to spend his so-called holiday at home with his father and return to Paris to take his degree the following winter.

"Good-bye, dearest," said he to Perrinette, who had come to the station to see him off.

Once in the train, he was the prey of conflicting emotions, products of the two aspects of his nature. Could he expect that Perrinette would not forget him during his three months' absence? No, he was not so trusting. She certainly loved him, though; she

was so unaffected, not a bit coquettish, and had she ever for one moment aroused his suspicions? But three months' separation was certainly a long time! He was disturbed by the thought that she might deceive him,—unhappy about it, too, for she had become very dear to him—and yet—and yet, his pride and his self-love suffered too. Away down deep in his nature he was conscious of a secret longing that she would completely forget him during the summer and never give him another thought. Wasn't that the simplest solution? Again the strict and cowardly prejudice of the country-bred asserted itself, and as the train sped nearer and nearer the home of his youth, all his old-time repression and fear returned.

"Caen!" said the conductor, and Christian was aroused from his introspection. As he alighted from the train, he saw at a glance that the place was unchanged. He hurried to his home on the *Rue des Carmes*, and as he entered it seemed even more dull and dreary than when he had left.

Monsieur Lescuyer did not leave his library to welcome his only son, but he did deign to give him a light kiss on the forehead, which gave Christian a sensation of gooseflesh all over his body. Here the

father sat, surrounded by briefs on his legal researches along the line of human baseness, and he created in his son's mind the impression of a sailor held fast in the clutches of polar icebergs.

On Christian's first evening at home, he was the guest of honor at a dinner to which his father had invited several of his old colleagues, who congratulated Christian on his work in Paris. One would have thought, to look at them, that they had assembled to pass sentence upon a criminal instead of to eat a dinner of turkey with truffles.

The month of September was rainy and dreary, and a suitable atmosphere it was for the return to Christian's old habits. Each day he went to the Court to observe methods, and on Sundays accompanied his father to church, where the long noses of the two Misses Gentilhomme and Monsieur Nouziere's catarrh irritated him beyond description. The afternoons were spent with Madame Leger-Taburet. Christian took note of the fact that the carpets and furniture were more faded than they had been the previous year—and that Madame's niece had not improved in appearance. Thus he coupled his impressions,—faded furniture and a

young girl's looks! He was not even conscious of the blush which suffused her cheeks, and if he had been, it would not have occurred to him that his coming had caused it. The fact that his father and her aunt had planned their marriage did not enter his mind. He listened patiently to the same nothings which had been worn threadbare, of the present gaudy fashions, corrupt politics and poor outlook for the harvest. Every topic was presented in its negative aspect.

During these three months of self-abnegation and ennui, Christian Lescuyer tried to live in the recollection of his experiences of the previous winter. He recalled the time he spent in Donadieu's studio smoking a cigarette and listening to the optimism and good humor of the artist. And he realized a growing lonesomeness for Perrinette.

He decided to write to her, and was quite overcome when he received her answer to his letter. Her writing and spelling were execrable, such as one might expect from an untutored laundress—but how naïve she was in telling him how much she had missed him! In sending "*mille baisers*" at the end of her letter, she had omitted the "double l" in

“*mille*,” but that did not lessen the warmth of feeling in Christian’s heart, nor keep him from counting the days until he would be with her again.

At last the final day of his exile (for such it must be termed) arrived. He felt no pangs at leaving his father, but was impatient to return to Paris. Perrinette met him at the station. How they embraced each other!

“You are very sure,” he asked, “that you have not fallen in love with anyone else while I was away —you swear it?”

“I swear,” she answered. And it was true. He was so affected that he almost wept for joy.

The next morning they went to invite François Donadieu and Héloïse to lunch with them. They found the sculptor in his barn-like studio, without a fire despite the cold November day. He was making a sketch for a new statue and was altogether out of sorts.

His “*Homme Au Trophée*” had been voted a place of honor at the last Salon, but its success had not come up to his expectations. The artist was in a very pessimistic mood, although he had just received a commission from the *Beaux Arts* to decor-

ate one room of the new Auditor's Office. It was to be an allegorical bas relief on a subject which did not appeal to him at all,—“Dispute.”

“I accepted it,” he said, “only because I owe two quarters' rent,—and my poor Héloise has given up her position to pose for my ‘Danaë’ for the next Salon. At night she sews until all hours to eke out a few sous by making novelties for the *Bon Marché*. What in the world do they expect me to make of so dry and uninspiring a subject as ‘Dispute’? I suppose a nude figure who wears a worried expression. I must have his biceps and every part of his anatomy help the effect. Oh, what a beastly profession I have chosen!”

Just at this outburst, Héloise came in, in her old summer dress, but radiating optimism. Her eyes beamed, and her good nature was so apparent that the artist felt its contagion and his pessimism vanished as if by magic.

“Good morning, Mam'selle la Gaieté,” he cried, “good morning, Mam'selle Good Hope. You shan't have to buy any provisions to-day, for we have a fine invitation to dine in a restaurant where the butter pats have the impression of cows on them, if you

please! And the wine is really old: its mustiness is not make-believe and does not escape with a little sponge the moment the cork is out of the bottle."

François' usual happy spirits had returned in full force. The party of four had a very enjoyable luncheon and at each fresh sally of her *petit Dieu's* wit, Héloïse burst into a loud laugh. Christian was making mental comparison of his love affair and that of François. He sat quite still, holding Perrinette's hand, under the table. He knew that he was very much in love with the quiet, sentimental little girl, and he thought his passion of a finer, higher type than that of his brusque, gay friends, François and Héloïse. It annoyed him very much to see Héloïse throw back her head and hold her sides at what seemed to him Donadieu's foolishness of sticking all the toothpicks in his beard and imitating the grimaces of a pagan god. As a fitting climax, François kissed Héloïse on both cheeks. "That was surely bad taste," thought Christian and again he pressed Perrinette's hand tenderly and lovingly.

And yet the emotion which the eminently practical and reasonable young man interpreted as a big love was in reality comparatively commonplace.

Those who were truly mated, in the highest sense, were the two of whose manner of love-making Christian so entirely disapproved. Without empty protestations, fine phrases and sweet nothings, they had given themselves, one to the other, no doubt for life. They were helpmeets, encouraging each other to bear life's burdens uncomplainingly. A bit ordinary in their way—that might be—but their hearts were in their love. As for you, Sir Student, torn by conflicting ties of love and ambition, what is to become of your dear little Perrinette when you will have submitted your thesis and won your degree?

CHAPTER V

THE DESERTION

THE winter months of Christian Lescuyer's second term in Paris passed quickly and uneventfully. He studied conscientiously, and his friendship with Perrinette continued. They both looked forward to the spring and early summer, when they could make the delightful little excursions to the country with François and Héloïse.

September came and with it the young student's well-earned degree. Lescuyer, Senior, was pleased with Christian's standing in his classes, and with unlooked-for generosity sent him a draft for 2,000 francs as a graduation gift. The father still demanded implicit obedience of the son and wrote to him that he expected his immediate return to Caen. Christian's love affair with Perrinette was reaching its end; he must heed his father's commands. He felt that his heart would break, but this outcome was

inevitable and Perrinette had prepared herself for it.

"What can one expect?" she said to Christian when he broached the subject. "What can one expect?" she repeated. "I have had a great deal of trouble and heartache in my time, but I suppose that's the way of the world."

His only reply to her simple philosophy was, "Alas, that is so."

He consoled himself with the thought that she was satisfied, that no doubt she would find some one else to take care of her. There were many others similarly conditioned. Why should he exaggerate the aspect of matters in his own mind?

As the time of their separation drew near, he could not help realizing how bad she looked, how quiet she had become. Even his caresses and tender words could not arouse her. Her only answer was a weak, sad smile.

"Ah," he thought, "she loves me so tremendously that she is pining in anticipation of our separation." His self-love was flattered that he could be the cause of such emotion, and he assumed a melancholy air, of which the dominant note was conceit. •

But his father's command must be obeyed, he must

return to Caen; so he set a day for leaving Paris. The last day that Christian and Perrinette were to spend together had come and they were busy packing his belongings. As they stood before the half-empty trunks, she suddenly threw her head on his shoulder, overcome, and sobbing uncontrollably.

"Forgive me, dear, forgive me, I should have told you sooner, but I did not dare, and then I was not sure, I did not want to believe it, but I am no longer in doubt. Christian, I am to become a mother."

Unfortunately, the workings of the human heart are not always uplifting. Only this test was necessary to convince this young egotist that he did not love the poor girl who had been so devoted to him. Maternity—what an unexpected misfortune! He looked at her dully. Her appearance was repulsive to him; now he understood the changed expression of her face. Her two years of slavish indulgence of his every whim, her self-denial and sweetness were to him as though they had never been! There was but one thought in his mind: Perrinette was to become a mother. Was his future to be ruined by acknowledging an illegitimate child? He was ter-

ror-stricken at the possibility that a day, an hour, even a single minute might come when he would have to face his relentless father and confess.

As he listened to Perrinette's views of the shame and unhappiness of what should have meant the glory of her womanhood under other conditions, he resorted to the usual promptings of a weak character. He pretended sympathy, he made all sorts of vague promises, he feigned a hypocritical pity. But in reality all the commiseration he was capable of was for himself, and he could see only how this miserable complication involved him. Why should he trouble himself about the outcome for this poor misguided child, who in her way was incapable of wickedness, who had even studied the Gospel in her childhood, but whose ideas of life and morality were the product of the environment of her youth?

It was understood that Perrinette was to spend the day of his departure at the shop as usual, but would meet him at the station at eight o'clock, where they had planned to have their farewell supper.

Christian Lescuyer wandered about, obsessed with one fixed idea of the turn things had taken. He argued the pros and cons in his own mind. If he

were to acknowledge the child as his own, his future would be ruined, he could never marry, that was certain. The social position of a young aspirant for the bench, living in a small provincial town as a bachelor and with an illegitimate child would be unbearable. He would be pointed out with scorn and shunned, his career would be completely destroyed. Was so great a sacrifice to be demanded for a Latin Quarter love affair? "And a love affair with whom?" he asked himself. With a young girl, very sweet and good-natured, to be sure, but who, according to her own confession, had not had a stainless past. Had she not accepted his advances from the time of their first meeting? What did he know of her conduct, he now thought, when she was not with him? He had often asked her how she spent her time while he was away, but that was more to pay her the compliment of thinking he was jealous than because he actually cared. Her answer, "You naughty boy," followed by an affectionate kiss, had really no significance. He had allowed her to come and go as she pleased. Probably she had not even taken the trouble to deceive him. He recalled now that she had once gone on an excursion with a friend.

The thought came with astonishing relief that perhaps he was allowing himself to worry about a situation which should not be his concern in the least. Should he permit his conscientious scruples to spoil his career at the outset for an imagined obligation which might in reality not be his? Wasn't such a punishment a bit extreme?

His mind dwelt with intensity on this very plausible thought and he continued in the same strain. He and Perrinette had reached an understanding as to the future, in fact she knew that at any time their friendship might cease. This explanation was in every sense acceptable, and in all justice to himself he felt that he owed her nothing. Of course, a little help for the present, some material comfort. Surely! That was an understood fact, for she would need money, the poor girl, and he wasn't exactly a monster. No, not he. He prided himself on his unselfishness.

Then he busied his mind thinking of his monetary resources. He was so happy that he still had seven or eight hundred francs of the money his father had sent him. He would slip these into an envelope and press them into Perrinette's hand when they said

good-bye. That would be a handsome remuneration, indeed!

He continued his walk with the conviction that he had reached an excellent conclusion, but remorse gnawed at his heart again. His conscience reproached him.

"You are committing a crime," it cried out to him. But self-interest answered promptly:

"That code of morality is too high,—perfect foolishness. It is a well-established fact that the woman in the case is always called upon to bear the brunt of the suffering, it is ordained that way."

Still turning the subject over in his mind, Christian reached the studio of his friend François, to whom he wished to say good-bye before he left. The key was not in the lock and the door was not opened at once when he knocked. Time had to be allowed for Héloïse, who was posing for "Danaë," to disappear before the visitor entered.

Christian stood rooted to the spot as he gazed for the first time upon the rough sketch of Donadieu's new statue. It showed evidence of having been modeled by a sculptor in love with his art and in love with his model. The figure was strong and grace-

ful, pulsating with love, and expressed in every particular the mythological story of Danaë, who was imprisoned in a brazen temple by her father because of a prophecy that her son was destined to be his slayer, and with whom Jupiter fell in love, appearing before her as a golden shower, in order to escape the vigilance of her guards.

Donadieu was flattered by his friend's silent admiration of his work. "It's sensuous but not sensual, isn't it? I am trying to catch the spirit of Titian's art, and I have found it very interesting to attempt to reproduce it in marble, with a few touches of gold. I hope it will please the greenhorns at the Beaux Arts."

"Be quiet, my *petit Dieu*," interrupted Héloïse. "It is the best thing you have ever done, your Danaë. I will make a wager that it will get the first prize." As she spoke, the big blonde seated herself at her sewing machine and began to stitch a dressing sacque.

For economy's sake, Héloïse and François were living in the same apartment now, exceedingly happy in being together constantly. She was a perfect model for the goddess Danaë, and her sittings

did not interfere with her sewing. Of course, she did not make very much money, thirty or forty sous a day, but what was the difference? Donadieu was going to enter his statue for the next Salon, and he had less time to work in the bronze factories in consequence. So her little pin-money kept them from having imaginary meals or living entirely on love.

"So you are leaving to-morrow," said François to Christian. "I cannot become accustomed to the idea, my little friend, that next winter you will appear in court in your cap and gown. Of course, I know that in your family the law is an hereditary profession, handed down from father to son, as in Egypt. I know full well what is expected of a judge. I was in court once. There was a court officer who distributed the briefs as one deals cards for a game of whist. They meant no more to him than the declarations to a customs inspector. 'Three months—six months—in prison,' were the verdicts,—acquitted, condemned. Oh, my little friend, I hope you will not allow yourself to be tied to the curule chair, and that we shall see you again from time to time."

"I hope so, too," answered the new doctor of law,

who was really sorry in a certain sense to leave Paris.

Héloïse sat at her machine, sewing steadily. Without raising her eyes from her work, she asked suddenly, with a touch of sympathy, almost pity, in her voice:

"And Perrinette, what is to become of her?"

The two girls were not well acquainted, in fact they met only when the four went out together to the suburbs or to an occasional supper. Perinnette had never made a confidante of Héloïse.

Her question reminded Christian of his anxiety and was very distasteful to him, so he answered off-handedly:

"We shall separate. I must leave her."

"Quite natural," said François, exchanging a meaning look with Héloïse. "You see, love with you two is not a fixed matter as it is with us. One of these days, my dear Christian, I shall have the honor of announcing to you the marriage of Monsieur François Donadieu, sculptor, and Mademoiselle Héloïse." All this with mock gravity. "She has not hastened it in the least," he continued, "my dear, devoted comrade, without whose assistance I

should never have been able to continue my work. She is sure that I love her and her only—but I want her to have the respect of the tradespeople as well. Nevertheless we must wait until we have the money to pay for a marriage license and the minister's fee.

“Isn't that so, madame?” he said, turning to Héloïse.

“Oh, our marriage will be celebrated without pomp. The young couple will not ride off in a coupé, with orange blossoms tied to the horses' ears, nor will there be a feast at the Palais Royal. No, indeed, but there will be a quiet little luncheon for the friends who act as witnesses. When my Danaë is ready for the moulder, I shall buy a set of chimney ornaments for five hundred francs, if you please, and after that the wedding will take place,—about the middle of October, no doubt.”

Christian listened as long as he could to François' plans, outlined with his usual gaiety and exuberance of spirit. Then he said good-bye and hurried back to his room to lock his trunks.

The idea that François intended to marry Héloïse, his model and the first girl who had ever crossed his path, seemed to Christian an evidence of very poor

taste, and yet he secretly envied him. But of course François was free to do as he pleased—no one would bother to remark the actions of a bohemian without family ties. But his own case was so different: he was the son of Monsieur Lescuyer, Judge of the Court of Caen, the direct descendant of generations of austere magistrates, of countless caps and gowns, and could not (even if he so desired) set aside his family traditions. Like his predecessors, he would have to marry some good, simple country girl, religiously brought up.

There was a fitness of things which had to be observed. Different strata of the social scale were ruled by different points of view. He even thought that the attitude of François (to place Héloise in a position in which respect was her due) was truly generous. But, on second thought, it entailed no sacrifice on the part of François. Even if he were to become a great artist, he would always be a man of most ordinary manners. His education and that of Héloise were on a par, for neither one had any to speak of. And in spite of that, who knows?—maybe in later years he would blush for her crudeness.

Anyway, was there any comparison between the

life of François and Héloïse and his affair with Perrinette? None in the least that he could see. They had attracted each other and their caprice had lasted longer than is usualp in such cases, but that was all. And again he told himself that he owed the girl nothing, absolutely nothing, but a little money: yes, that he would give her because of her approaching accouchement, which he would not allow to disturb him, and for which he did not hold himself responsible. Later, he would keep in touch with her.

As to the child,—perhaps it would not live, and if it did live he would surely look out for it, and that was certainly honorable on his part.

He had come to detest Perrinette, poor girl, and the happy thought that to-night he would eat his last meal with her was comforting. The prospect of her good-byes, kisses, sobs, and explanations, was odious in the extreme. He had promised to meet her at eight o'clock.

Suddenly he remembered that there was an earlier train for Caen which left at four o'clock. He still had time to catch it. "So much the better," he thought, becoming cruel and brutal in his desire not

to see the girl again. "I hate scenes." He rang for the waiter.

"Bring me my bill and order a fiacre," he said, "and be quick about it."

Then he wrote a sad note to Perrinette, full of an unbelievable lie that the sudden illness of his father necessitated his leaving at once—she knew he had delayed his departure for more than a month to be with her.

Not a word about Perrinette's condition, but he did not forget to say that he would let her know how he was getting along, and the concluding words "*je t'embrasse*," hastily scrawled on the slip of paper in which he had enclosed the banknotes, were a stinging insult.

He called a messenger to deliver the note to Perrinette at the shop, without giving a thought to the effect it would have on her to receive it when all her co-workers were with her.

One hour later, when Christian Lescuyer was on the train, bound for Caen, a sudden chill and fever came over him in contemplation of what he had done, and yet he was conscious of a bitter joy and relief at his paradoxical bravery in cowardice.

CHAPTER VI

THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIAN FORGEAT

THE circumstances in which Perrinette now found herself were very tragic. A young woman alone in the world and forced to earn her own livelihood with the expenses of her coming accouchement which had to be met in advance.

Perrinette Forgeat accepted her fate with calm resignation, after the first rude awakening and shock of Christian's conduct had lost its sting. She never gave a thought to the other men who had played their rôles in her life-drama, but she realized how trusting she had been in believing in his devotion. Despite her ignorance, she knew that she could not put any faith in his promise to write to her and provide for the child, if it lived. She even knew that he had eased his own conscience of all responsibility by sending her the bank notes to defray her first expenses. She made excuses for him in her own mind.

"Everything will come out all right; there was nothing else for him to do," she thought.

But in reality her life was very sad. Her co-workers gloated, whereas they had formerly been jealous of her as the best-looking and best-dressed girl in the shop. Instead of pitying her, they had jokes among themselves at her expense, and in fact one heartless creature openly derided her. There was one generous woman, however, who was sympathetic because she had had a similar experience, and she gave Perrinette well-meant advice. She told her of a small private hospital where she would receive good care.

Perrinette thanked her and took note of the address to make arrangements. Madame Lagasse was the accoucheuse,—“first class,” as it said on her sign-board, on which she was pictured as a fashionable woman with a chubby child in her arms, and all about her dozens of cabbages in each of which a baby’s head was visible. But the real Madame Lagasse did not resemble her symbolic portrait in the least. She looked exactly like a bull-dog, and her face wore the same expression of ugliness, with a lurking kindness, however. For thirty years

engaged in the same "profession," she had earned the name of "Mother Lagasse," by which she was known. Several thousand citizens of France, of both sexes, had uttered their first cry in her establishment—their first expression of the joy of living. If it had been necessary to find out their pedigrees, most of them would have been branded with the stigma of illegitimacy; but they were spared that humiliation, for there was no one to inquire. Mother Lagasse tried to be as kind as she could to the young girl-mothers who were in her charge. When she had a few moments' spare time, she amused them by telling their fortunes by cards. It was always the same old story of a blond "gentleman" (the king of hearts) or a dark "young man" (the jack of clubs) who still loved the girl devotedly, despite all appearances to the contrary. Though there might be many obstacles, fate would bring the lovers together again and they would live happily ever after.

Six months after Christian had deserted her, Perrinette became the mother of a fine baby boy at Madame Lagasse's private hospital. The child's name was entered on the Civil State Register as Christian Forgeat, son of Perrinette Forgeat, father

not known. This fact was duly noted before the same two witnesses who always acted in that capacity when the occasion demanded. One was the porter from the opposite corner, the other a coal heaver, both of whom made all possible haste to exchange their gratuities for beer. Christian Lesscuyer's son was surely not beginning life in accordance with the traditions of his father's family!

Perrinette had named her son "Christian" because she still entertained fond hopes that his father would provide for him sooner or later, and that he would be touched by her choice of a name when he knew of it. She even wrote to Caen to announce the birth of the little fellow, and while she awaited a reply hung with feverish interest on every word of prophecy which the fortune teller told her. The cards promised that a handsome "dark young man" (the jack of spades) was about to take a long trip (the three of diamonds); that Perrinette would soon receive a letter (ace of diamonds), and that despite the ill will of another dark man (the king of spades), Perrinette would be very happy: everything would turn out for the best. And still the girl waited in vain for an answer to her letter. Incapable of

hatred and malice, she still thought tenderly of Christian!

She was soon able to leave the hospital and go back to her work in the florist's shop. Now she would have to work harder than ever, for she hadn't a sou in the world after paying three months' nursing in advance for her baby.

Every Sunday, she went to see him. The nurse and her husband received her with honeyed politeness, and invariably presented her with a long bill for the baby's absolute necessities. She paid it willingly, though it entailed a most rigid economy on her part. What matter to her, so long as the baby thrived?

The time came when her salary was not sufficient to pay all her expenses. Without any hesitation, she took her few little pieces of jewelry, her prized possessions, to the pawnbroker. She economized on her own food, almost to the starvation point. She resigned herself to buy second-hand shoes and wore her old clothes, which were almost in rags. She was truly heroic, this little Parisienne, but she could not seem to get out of debt. At the end of the month she owed ten francs for her own expenses,

and three times as much to the baby's nurse, who reminded her of it every Sunday in a very forceful manner.

The easy-going, light-hearted Perrinette of former days was carrying a burden which was too heavy for her. What was she to do? How make both ends meet? She had to bring up her boy.

One of her friends, to whom she told her trouble, advised her to accept the usual solution of such problems. Her experience had made her wary: she knew just what she could expect. Her decision involved a question of self-preservation, not of morality. She adored her baby, lived only for him now. When once a week she had the chance to hold him and press him to her mother-heart, she felt repaid for all her sacrifice. His face was as serious as that of a little old man.

Palaiseau, the suburb where the baby lived with his foster parents, could be reached either by omnibus or by train. Perrinette went with the 'bus because it was cheaper. On one particular Sunday, towards the end of September, Perrinette was more depressed than usual. The nurse had given her a long bill for absolute necessities for the little boy,

who had been ill during the week. She had implored a little extra time in which to pay it and had received the gruff reply:

"You know this state of affairs cannot go on forever."

The girl felt that her heart was breaking. The future did not look rose-colored to her.

She trudged along, heavy-hearted, toward the station. When the 'bus came, she saw that there were no vacant places inside, so she climbed up on top. A man helped her ascend and politely moved up to give her a seat next to him. He was about thirty-five years old and wore carpenter-unionist clothes,—the trousers with velvet bands at the sides.

Perrinette's appearance was not now what it had been. At one time she was so chic that everyone would turn to look at her, but now, in her faded clothes and without gloves, she did not attract attention. Quite unceremoniously, her neighbor began to talk to her. She turned to look at him and saw that he had red hair, a military moustache, a fearless eye, and a deeply lined forehead. In a word, he looked like a hard-working, honest fellow. Before half an hour had passed, he had told her a great deal

about himself. He was from Lorraine, had taken up engineering, and was now employed by Monsieur Baschaud, a wholesale dealer at a salary of seven francs a day. His eldest sister lived at Palaiseau. She was married to a market gardener and he visited them every Sunday, more for the sake of getting the air than for any other reason.

He called Perrinette "Mademoiselle," as he looked up at her several times with admiration.

"You go to Palaiseau very often, too, don't you, mademoiselle? I have seen you on the 'bus several times. Do you visit your parents there?"

"No," she replied quickly, without stopping to think of the effect of her answer, "my little son is out there."

"I beg your pardon, *madame*," he answered. "I meant no offense when I called you mademoiselle, but you look so young."

The threats of the baby's nurse rang in her ears again, and a wave of self-pity stole over her.

"Alas," she said, "call me what you will. I have a baby, but his father deserted me.—There are thousands of experiences like mine, aren't there?"

Some force beyond her control impelled her to tell

her whole unfortunate story to this strange man. He listened attentively, interrupting her once in a while with an exclamation of "Poor girl!"

He was not very eloquent, and when she had finished her recital he made the commonplace comment: "Yes, life is not always joyful!"

Perrinette knew that he pitied her but did not know how to express it.

At the next corner she told the conductor to stop, and, although the carpenter lived quite some distance away, he alighted with her. Suddenly he became self-conscious and took off his hat.

"Do you expect to go to Palaiseau next Sunday?" he asked nervously.

"Certainly. Au revoir, monsieur," she replied.

"Au revoir, *mademoiselle*."

On the following Sunday they met again and conversed like a pair of old friends. As Perrinette sat on the top of the 'bus with him in that cool September twilight, she was completely at peace and almost happy. She knew that his voice was softer when he spoke to her and that he wished to propose to her but he felt that he did not dare. He was not bold, like the other men she had known.

When Prosper Aubry (that was the young carpenter's name) told her with evident embarrassment that his wages were good, that he had laid aside more than one thousand francs in the Savings Bank, that he was tired of living a bachelor's life, etc., a number of unhappy thoughts flooded her mind.

If only she had been fortunate enough to have met a man of this type earlier in her life, to marry him and settle down to a happy home life! she mused. Her morality was the price she had paid to satisfy her desire to wear stylish hats and own a few pieces of jewelry. She realized acutely, for the first time, what her life had been.

"Will you have a glass of beer with me?" he asked. They entered a café on the Boulevard Montparnasse, and when they were seated at a small table in the corner, Prosper Aubry declared himself.

"I have never met a girl who attracted me as much as you do," he said. "Since last Sunday you have never been out of my thoughts for an instant. You were so honest with me, and I appreciate your confidence. Despite all that you have told me—even the child—I would marry you to-night, if I were free. But, dear, I want you to know I am not a bachelor."

I am married, but my wife ran away from me after two years of misery. That was five years ago, and since that time I have lived like a widower.

"Now that you understand, will you come to live with me, if I promise to take the child too?" he asked in all good faith. "He shall be known as my own son. I have some money saved, I told you. I shall buy furniture for our little home, and you will be the housekeeper.

"And, dear," he continued, "I give you my word of honor that I shall never mention your past to you, and I will try to love the baby as though he were really mine."

Perrinette was so overcome by this kind offer that she could not speak. Her silence meant consent and gratitude. She felt very tender toward this gruff, brusque workman who was so kind to her, and it was a long while since anyone had spoken to her of love.

CHAPTER VII

THE MOTHERLESS CHILD

PERRINETTE FORGEAT and Prosper Aubry took an apartment in one of the suburbs. From their window on the fifth floor, there was an extensive outlook on roof and chimney as far as the eye could reach. The spires of Notre Dame and the dome of the Panthéon gave majesty to the view.

The little home consisted of but two rooms, heated by a tiny Delft stove, but what mattered the size? Happiness and contentment made it seem a palace! Perrinette, so full of love, adored Prosper for his goodness to her. She had not felt it a sacrifice to give up her position in the shop and work for him at a much smaller salary. Prosper made a good living for himself and her and paid the baby's board at Palaiseau. Personal adornment had lost its attraction for Perrinette: the important consideration now was that the home should be carefully looked out for and that Prosper should find all his creature comforts in readiness every evening on his return. The little Parisienne, whose conception of what was

worth while in life had been so different, was even satisfied to do the washing.

Prosper was in every sense a model, she thought. He was never intoxicated, no, not even on Sundays; every fortnight he brought home his wages intact. Then, too, he was so considerate, never making the slightest allusion to her past experiences. Of course he would not go with her to see the child, but she could not be too exacting since he paid the bill so uncomplainingly.

No doubt he had his faults, like everyone else, but he had not shown them to her. Of course, she knew that the deep line in his forehad was an unfailing sign of a violent temper if he were aroused. But with her he was as gentle as a lamb, never raising his voice, even caressing her as though he were afraid she might break if he handled her roughly. It was as though a big dog were playing with a little child.

Perrinette was very happy indeed. She felt she could hold up her head now, and she took on a new value in her own esteem. Everyone thought she was married: the neighbors and tradespeople called her Madame Aubry. She was pleased with this pseudo-respectability.

There was but one thing lacking to make Perrinette completely happy, and that was to have her baby, her little Christian, with her constantly.

"What makes my Perrinette look so radiant?" asked Prosper one day after she had been to Palaiseau.

"Our baby has been weaned, Prosper, and I want to bring him here. May I?" she asked. There was a flitting look of displeasure on his face, but he answered quickly:

"Yes, let's have the little scamp."

The next evening, when Prosper came home to his dinner, Perrinette met him at the door with the baby in her arms. Involuntarily the line in his forehead deepened when he saw the child, but he managed to say, with a sign of enthusiasm, "What a fine little fellow he is," but Perrinette's mother heart felt that he was not sincere. He had promised to love the child as if he were his own; that was why she had said "our baby." Was this possible?

The little mother realized that she must be very tactful and keep in abeyance her love for the child when Prosper was at home. He too tried to feign affection for little Christian, but he was cursed with

a jealous, petty nature which resented keenly the existence of any outside interest which would deprive him of Perrinette's entire devotion. At night, when he came home from work, he would make a pretense of kissing the baby's forehead, but Perrinette could see that his heart did not prompt the love he tried to show. He attempted to suppress his annoyance when the child cried or caused any of the hundred and one little discomforts which were unavoidable in such small quarters, but his efforts at self-repression did not escape Perrinette's watchful eye. Once when she was off her guard and in response to the prompting of her mother-love, she pressed the child to her breast and kissed him passionately, she saw an expression of hatred come over the man's face.

"He does not love me as he used to," she thought as she rocked Christian's cradle. However, she hoped for the best.

But as time went on, this state of affairs grew worse, instead of better. It was very evident that the presence of the child was obnoxious in the extreme to his "step-father." He was a source of annoyance, a hindrance.

Through Perrinette's loving care, the baby thrived, and when his features began to form he did not resemble his mother at all, but was the image of the father who had deserted her before the child's birth. She realized acutely that this likeness would estrange her the more from Prosper.

At the dinner table one night, when she was lost in reveries recalled by the little baby face, Aubry turned to her abruptly and said:—

"Well, it's very evident he does not look like you."

"Poor baby," she answered blushingly, "the fault is not his."

With unfailing mother instinct, she realized that the sight of the child had become a torture to the man who had been so good to her. Each day he was less tender to her on that account. The erstwhile peace of the home was embittered, her pleasure in providing for Aubry and looking after his comforts was completely destroyed.

Poor Perrinette was called upon to decide another difficult problem which was beyond her powers of adjustment. She deliberated,—what was she to do? Suddenly, as she thought, an inspiration came to her.

Why not write to Christian Lescuyer, tell him the whole truth and ask him to provide for the child as he had promised? The thought of losing the child was a painful one, for she adored him, but she would put aside her own feelings for the interest of Prosper and the child. Perrinette decided to tell Aubry of her decision.

"I have a plan to propose," she said. As she proceeded, the line on his forehead became a deep groove and his outburst knew no bounds:

"Are you crazy?" he cried. "What do you expect from that beastly peasant who deserted you as soon as you told him of your condition? Furthermore, I absolutely forbid you—do you hear me?—absolutely forbid your writing to him. If by chance he has repented, so much the worse for him: he has lost track of you and his son. I would be happy if I knew this minute that he was looking for you and could not find you,—that he was suffering! That would be my revenge, for I loathe that man, whom I have never seen and whose name I do not even know. I am consumed with hatred for him, when I think that he is a younger man than I, has had a much better education than I, that you were his mis-

tress before I knew you and that he is the father of your child. He lied when he made love to you, but I am sure he was better able to appeal to you than I, who am sincere. Why did you remind me of all this? Up to now, I have been able to keep my promise and not mention your past to you, but when you compel me, I'll say all I think, and you will listen.

"I hate that child, who takes some of your love and attention from me. I thought I would become accustomed to having him around and even grow to love him, but I cannot. I know it isn't his fault, but neither is it mine. I shall never care for him, and that settles it. I cannot keep you from loving him, from being a devoted mother, but don't ever mention his father's name to me again or I'll put the child out of my house."

Perrinette saw the hopelessness of the situation and her heart bled again, but this wound was the deepest of all she had suffered, for it affected the best and highest of her nature, her motherhood. Aubry's antipathy towards the child grew stronger until the time came when he abused the poor little innocent on the slightest provocation.

"Christian, just wait and you'll see what I'll do," he would say to the child a hundred times a day, and the look in his eye and his gruff voice would have terrified an older person than the unfortunate little three-year-old. Under the influence of such treatment the child was not very docile. His face had a wilful expression which was intensified by the thick black eyebrows so characteristic of the Lescuyer family, and he looked older than his years.

His invariable answer was, "Mais, Papa," and the word "father" only served to infuriate Aubry. Every day there was a scene, with or without cause. It would be:

"How badly that child eats."

"How dirty he looks."

"What! Nine o'clock and he's not in bed yet? Put him to bed at once," and the crease in Prosper's forehead would emphasize his displeasure. He made no further effort now to suppress it.

At the table one evening, the boy gave him an answer which was not quite as respectful as he demanded. A hard slap across the face was Prosper's only reply.

"Oh, Prosper," cried Perrinette, distressed.

"What's the matter now?" he said gruffly, "isn't one even allowed to teach children manners nowadays? If my father had not given me a few blows, a fine cadet I would have been." Turning to the boy, he continued: "And if you don't stop that crying, I'll find a way to make you."

Next day it began all over again, and the little boy, so unjustly corrected for trifles, became sullen, and a look of resentment came into his eyes whenever he looked at the man who, he believed was his father.

Perrinette tried to be the peacemaker, but all her efforts were fruitless. With one look, Prosper terrified and silenced her. Poor thing, she was so unhappy, secretly spoiling the child to mitigate the unfair treatment of him and openly agreeing for policy with Prosper. What an unfortunate environment for the plastic mind of a young child! Perrinette loved her baby and longed to defend him, but she was grateful to the big, gruff man. She made excuses in her own mind for his implacable hatred of another man's child.

Poverty added to the hopeless condition. The siege of Paris, in the Franco-Prussian war, reduced

the daily income to thirty sous. Perrinette had long since given up all personal vanity. She had lost her looks and thought nothing now of going in the street in her dressing sacque, whereas she had once been so dainty. Meanwhile Prosper had enlisted, and the inactive army life was his ruination. He drank with his companions during the day, and when he came home at night his face was heated with wine and his entire appearance suggested violence.

During all this miserable period, which lasted until the end of May, the little home in which peace had once reigned had become a veritable hell, but when the war was at an end, the workman found employment again and returned to his regular routine. A little of the old-time order and peace was restored, Perrinette and Prosper adjusted themselves to the improvement, but his dislike of Christian grew more intense. He never addressed a word to the boy now, except to find fault or to give him an order, and he slapped him on the slightest provocation. Once in a while the look of entreaty in Perrinette's eyes would deter him. And what was the effect on the little fellow? From being constantly bullied and harshly dealt with, he lived in constant fear and a

furtive look came into his eyes. Whenever his so-called father spoke to him, his body was all of a tremble and he unconsciously raised his hand as if to ward off a blow.

Poor, poor baby,—was he the retribution of his parents' sin? To him, existence was a curse, not a blessing. He was destined to lose the only one in the world who had a spark of love for him. Fate had indeed dealt cruelly with him. One evening he came home from school with a rash covering his entire body, complained of headache, and during the night became delirious. He had caught scarlet fever, which was epidemic in the neighborhood.

His mother took care of him, caught the disease, and in three days was dead. Had she a soul? O God, but Thou wilt forgive. Lord of justice, Thou wilt understand her mistakes and make allowances for her life. Receive her into the Kingdom of Heaven, O Merciful Father!

Christian lived. Why was he spared? He had just turned six when his mother died. Prosper Aubry loathed him now with an unspeakable hatred. Why should he be burdened with this illegitimate child because he had loved its mother, for whose

death the boy was responsible? And this brat was to live with him, called him papa and no doubt wondered why he was not loved. That was a little too much to be tolerated. He was nothing but a stranger. Prosper had every right to put him out of the house, throw him into the street.

"I'd do it in a minute," he thought, "but for his mother's memory." It would have been kinder to the child if he had done so.

Conscience would whisper to his hard heart, once in a while: "But he's only an innocent baby." He did not understand the vague scruples which prompted him to keep the boy, to feed and to clothe him. The neighbors pitied the poor widower who seemed so heartbroken. The women often stopped him on the stairs to speak of his dear little son. And he hated him!

There was no restraining influence now. No pleading eyes stayed the heavy hand from its blows and cuffs. From repeated beatings and kicks, Christian became round-shouldered, and the expression of his eyes was that of a whipped dog.

He got supper ready every night. "You rascal, that's the least I can have of you, that you wait on

me," Prosper told him. His father's homecoming, always late, was a moment of torture for the boy. Prosper was generally in bad humor now from the effects of two or three absinthes, for he had become addicted to drink since Perrinette's death.

His abuse would begin with the first spoonful of soup.

"What do you call this stuff? Am I an animal that you give me this dog's food?"

"Mais, Papa, I expected you an hour ago."

"What is that? I suppose I'll have to obey monsieur's orders after this."

The terrified child kept silent.

"Will you answer me, you devil, instead of looking at me like a sneak?"

And then the blows began to rain.

The boy was in despair. Can one imagine coupling the two words,—infancy and despair? He became silent, almost savage. In the district school which he attended, the instructor to whom pedagogy and child psychology were unknown subjects, took a dislike to the quiet, sullen boy and derided him before his classmates. They in turn made of him a pariah, a laughing-stock.

School became hateful to him, and one day as he stood on the door step so keen was his disgust that he decided not to go in. He wandered about the streets all day long. He was severely punished by the principal for his truancy and beaten by Prosper. Blows could not hurt him any more, he had become so callous. He repeated the offense. The freedom of the hours in the street, in the crowd, away from the cruel instructor and heartless comrades and from his violent father, was worth the inevitable punishment which he knew must follow.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TWO STREET ARABS

IT is a well established fact that every human being, in looking back calmly upon his childhood, can point with unerring certainty to incidents, trivial in themselves, which have nevertheless left lasting impressions and greatly influenced his character and destiny. A warm July night marked such an experience in the development of young Christian "Aubry." The day had been very hot and again he had played truant. After wandering about the streets all day he found himself toward evening, at the dock on the canal St. Martin. The sun was about to set, and the boats in the little harbor were bathed, as it were, in gold. So it seemed to the tired little boy, at any rate. For the first time in his youthful experience, *wanderlust* took hold of Christian and he felt that desire to go far away which quickens the imagination of all children. He stood in silent admiration,

overwhelmed by the sight of a large boat, which had come from Flanders. The bridge was deserted. Only a dog was keeping watch. The door of the Captain's cabin was ajar, disclosing an inviting room which seemed luxurious to the boy.

"How happy one could be on such a boat!" thought Christian, in his childish reverie. In imagination he saw himself as a cabin-boy, loved by the big white dog barking at him from the bridge. He breathed a deep sigh as he reflected on the joy of being far away from all those who made him suffer,—his father, the teacher, his school-fellows.

As if in answer to his thoughts, some one said, in a shrill voice, "Say! pretty fine boat, ain't it?"

Christian turned quickly and saw a boy about ten years of age, in rags. The most remarkable part of his outfit was an old coat which must have belonged to a large man. It reached the boy's knees and the sleeves were pushed half way back, to allow him the use of his hands. Despite his ragged appearance, his unkempt hair and sickly complexion, the little gamin's bright eyes and retroussé nose gave evidence of the good-nature and light-heartedness of which he was capable. Something about him appealed

to Christian at once, even as François Donadieu had appealed to the other Christian.

"Do you like to see the boats, too?" asked the boy. "What's your name? Mine is Natole."

Although this introduction was not strictly in accordance with the rules of British etiquette, Christian had no hesitancy about accepting it.

"My name is Christian," he answered.

"Christian? What kind of a name do you call that? I never heard a name like that before. It's in your family, I suppose. Sure! I can see that. You have decent shoes, too."

Having exhibited his powers of observation, Natole turned to whistling the latest popular song, "Josephine, charming Josephine," which was quite the rage at all the cafés. Then he added:

"Let's go to see the paddle. I think we can see it work now. It's great sport to watch."

And Christian eagerly followed his new-found companion. He was fascinated by this boy who treated him as his equal. Other boys at school had always made a butt of him. After they had stood some little time watching the play of water, they were boon comrades. They exchanged confidences.

Natole knew that Christian had "“cut” school, that he was in no hurry to go home, for fear of the punishment his father would mete out to him.

"Say," said Natole, the youthful philosopher. "With you, it's your father who's the devil; with me it's a stepmother. Gee, she's a terror. I get a box on the ears and a cowhiding for my meals. But what do I care?—it's eight days now since I've put my nose inside the door, and you bet that's not the first time I've stayed away either."

"You stay away!" cried Christian, astonished and regarding this hero with increased admiration. "How do you get along?"

"Cinch!" said Natole, with a careless shrug of his shoulders. "If you look for things, you'll find them. There's lots of ways,—holding horses, opening carriage doors, going on errands. In the mornings, I help unload vegetables. The only hard part is to find a corner to sleep in every night. But it's not bad now. I know where some new houses are, only you have to look out for the cowhide, if you sleep too long, that's all. It's a snap."

A new and acceptable point of view was dawning on Christian.

"Say, but what happens when they find you and take you back to your stepmother?"

"I get pounded," said the other reminiscently. "It's hell in our house, I tell you, nothing but beatings. My old man drinks all day long, and his devil of a wife hates me, and for nothing at all gets after me with a poker. I won't be beaten all the time, so I go off on my own hook. Darn it, there's no place like the street."

As Christian listened to all this independence, a church bell near by tolled six o'clock. The boy turned pale and trembled. His father would come home, find no supper ready, and fly into a passion. Christian could almost feel the heavy fist descending on his little body.

An irresistible temptation took hold of him "not to go back to the old stable," as Natole said; to get along as best he could, to be free. But fear asserted itself again, he did not dare launch forth, alone. He was thoroughly frightened at the prospect. A ray of hope dawned on him. If only this fearless Natole, experienced and aware of the pitfalls, this hero, whom he worshipped, should take him as his companion. Acting on this inspiration, he asked:

"Say, where do you sleep to-night?"

"In a coaling boat, near the Tournelle bridge. There's no one there at night, and there are always nets to cover with. It's a darn nuisance to have to get up so early,—those coal heavers come before sunrise and then we have to beat it, but that's not so bad, that brings us to the vegetable wagons on time. The boat won't be unloaded for three days, so I have my bed, as sure as though I had a key to a bunk in a hotel. And the best part of it all is that I have the price of a meal for to-night," added Natole, proudly exhibiting four sous in the palm of his dirty hand.

"Bread and cheese will be the feed,—you can have half if you want. I bet a hat you are tired of your father's knocks and beatings and you're dying to beat it."

Christian looked at Natole, fascinated, feeling that he read his soul.

"Say, do you mean it? You'll be my pal?" he said.

"Sure, I will," answered Natole.

The partnership was formed and the two little vagabonds joined forces.

When Prosper Aubry returned from work, that night, he found his "son" missing.

"Ah, ungrateful hound!" he growled, as he prepared his own supper. "Don't worry, I'll make you suffer for this."

An hour passed and another. Still Christian did not come in.

"So much the worse for him. I'll make him sleep out to-night," said Aubry, throwing himself on the couch for a nap.

Next morning, he became uneasy when the boy did not return, despite his lack of feeling for him. He went down to the janitor to ask him if he had seen Christian. It did not take long for the entire neighborhood to know of his disappearance.

"What an ungrateful, sneaking, lazy dog he is," cried Prosper. "And now his latest trick is to stay out all night."

"Suppose he has had an accident," ventured a timid young woman with a little baby in her arms.

"No such thing,—I guess I know him," answered Aubry gruffly. "He's a vagabond, he plays hookey every time he gets a chance."

"But, Monsieur Aubry," said the young mother,

"the poor child! His eyes are often red and swollen from crying. I know it's trying to bring up children,—they are often so obstinate—but maybe you are a bit hard on him."

Aubry became purple with rage.

"Why don't you tell me he's a little martyr," he shrieked, "and that he's run away because I ill-treated him. The whole world is unjust! Now I'll tell you something you don't know," he continued in his passion. "His mother and I were not married and that brat whom you pity so is the child of some one I don't even know, and out of the kindness of my heart I have taken care of him,—and this is my reward."

As Prosper Aubry went out to report the boy's disappearance to the police, all the neighbors agreed in sympathizing with this unfortunate man whose generous spirit had met with such ingratitude.

For a whole week no trace could be found of the boy. It was as though the earth had opened and swallowed him up. What could have become of him?

Meanwhile, Christian was enjoying his liberty more than he had ever dreamed was possible. There

is something of the savage in a child, an instinct that craves freedom from restraint. He found it quite natural to shift for himself and to sleep out in the open.. The summer was beautiful, the nights warm, and the two boys slept peacefully on the boat. They always managed to scrape together a couple of sous for a lunch of waffles or a supper of fruit, bought from a street vender. Their scheme was to prowl around the restaurants, theatres and public balls, for here they were reasonably certain of getting a small tip from the high livers and pleasure-seekers for opening their carriage doors.

Natole, who knew his Paris as a gamekeeper his forest, led the way to the corners where a couple of sous could be picked up.

Each day brought with it some new experience to the repressed child, some privilege which made his liberty seem a veritable heaven. The menagerie was a new-found joy. Natole's ability to open a closed fence was second to none. He was certainly a wonderful guide! Now that fear had been conquered, Christian found everything delightful and amusing.

"Cheese it, the cop!" Natole would whisper,

whenever a guardian of the peace came in sight. To evade this terror became a more exciting game than prisoner's base.

Of course, being a vagabond had some disadvantages. A heavy shower came up, and the two little gamins had to seek protection under the arch of a bridge where they remained in one position for over three hours. Sometimes funds were low or gave out altogether. Once their supper consisted of a broken loaf of bread which Natole had picked out of a garbage can. What's the odds? One can live on crumbs, like mice. How appropriate that on the escutcheon of Paris there is a symbolic ship and how full it must be of just this sort of mice,—little homeless vagabonds.

After five days, everything seemed to go wrong. Times were hard. There was incessant rain, which continued throughout the night, and sleeping quarters were uncertain. The coaling vessel had been unloaded, and the two gamins watched their isle of safety drift down the river toward Bourgogne.

Even the policemen became more severe and looked at them very critically. It was pretty hard sleeping outside in an unfinished house, which was

like a cave of the winds. The two little vagabonds went about in their soaked clothes. They looked pitiful, with their long, pinched faces and encircled eyes. They deserved the charity of the diners at the restaurants from whom they begged a couple of sous, but they received only the scoldings of the waiters, who chased them away with their napkins as if they were so many flies. They hungered for a word of kindness, poor little chaps!

"What's the matter with you?" said Natole. "Do you want to quit? You've had enough? I ain't holding you,—go back to your 'papa.' Maybe you like it better with him."

And Christian followed him, terror-stricken by the mere possibility of returning to his old home. A combination of self-preservation and a generous sort of sense of honor, of keeping his word, made him remain. He loved his protector, his boon companion Natole, who was so brave and ingenious in finding the wherewithal to get along, and he did not want to leave him.

Although his youthful intelligence had been sharpened by his experience, something troubled him vaguely. Begging was repulsive to him, and con-

science asserted itself once when Natole took a handful of figs for their supper.

"That ain't right," he said, "that's stealing."

"Stealing? Why do you eat them then?" asked Natole. "Stealing? It's the grocer who steals, when he holds down the scales, or cuts off a piece of cheese after it's weighed. Say, none of that, or I'll get mad. I get something for you to eat, and you call me a thief. I won't have it. You fool, do you want to die of hunger?"

Christian's shaky scruples were squelched by these arguments: his friend's influence over him was too strong to attempt contradiction.

Their schooling was becoming more difficult every day. The heavy rains continued. Natole, bare-headed, and chilled through, walked with a less important air, and Christian, whose shoes were water-soaked, dragged one foot after the other. Seven days and nights had passed since they had started out to face the world together.

Still their courage was heroic! They made a pact to sleep out of doors, to beg from a peasant, who tolerated their demands, and to steal two sous' worth of dried fruits each day from an honorable mer-

chant whose conscience did not trouble him when he gave short weight. There are all sorts of fine shades and distinctions in the conception of honesty, of which proper account is not taken. The explorer who, under the pretext of reforming the negroes in Africa, effects an exchange of his beautiful hand-carved ivories for a handful of brightly colored buttons, is not a dishonest man but an intrepid pioneer of civilization. Even if he is murdered as a penalty of his trickery and leaves to his country a heritage of a foreign expedition which costs a mint of money and thousands of soldiers' lives to avenge his death, still he is a hero and not a vagabond, and all his fellow-countrymen honor his achievements. The politician who gets rich at the expense of the poor is only carrying out an approved political scheme which conforms to the accepted code. The public servant whose debts overwhelmed him before his attainment of his life's ambition, but who, after two years' office, during which he has loudly proclaimed his whole-souled devotion to the interests of the people, has a deposit of 2,000,000 francs in the Bank of England,—how dare anyone call him a thief? No, indeed, he is serving his party to the

best of his ability and answers these undeserved criticisms of his methods with silent disdain.

But the little culprits, less than ten years of age, who sleep in unfinished buildings and beg for their few sous to keep body and soul alive, whose treatment in their so-called homes forces them to a criminal life from infancy—they are indeed culprits, thieves! They constitute a real danger to the public welfare! From them, we need the protection of our police system! It shows great foresight on the part of our legislators that they provide a special fund in the budget for the care and punishment of these dangerous young rascals!

CHAPTER IX

THE CHILD CULPRIT

THUS is the code of society regulated! The two young "criminals" in whom we are interested were roused at four o'clock in the morning by two officers, who represented Law and Order in all their dignity. One was in civilian's clothes and his appearance was such as to frighten any peaceful citizen who might unexpectedly come face to face with him; the other was a city policeman.

Natole and Christian jumped up, terror-stricken. One was seized roughly by the shoulder, the other violently pulled by the right arm.

"I told you we would find those two devils here," said one officer to the other, priding himself on his keen intuition. Turning to the prisoners, he cried:

"Oust, la vermine!" Get into that patrol wagon as quick as you can."

In a few minutes, they reached the station house, and were thrown into a filthy cell. Strange to say,

they were alone. This was Christian's first experience and the boy shuddered as he listened to the dismal noises all about him. He burst into tears, but his companion was too hardened to show any emotion. He walked up and down with his arms folded, stamping his feet in rage at the thought of his lost liberty.

Christian controlled himself sufficiently to ask in a shaky voice:—"Tell me, Natole, what will they do to us?"

"Oh! I forgot, you don't know the ropes," answered his experienced comrade. "The jail, the court, the trial, is what happens." These unknown words increased the boy's terror.

"What's all that?" he whined.

"Go on, you'll find out soon enough. It's no fun, the jail, but you don't die there."

"And after that?"

"Oh! they let our parents know, and ask if they'll take us back. My dear father always does. Gee, won't I get kicked and beat!"

Christian shuddered. He felt sure, too, that his punishment would be merciless. His independent spirit vanished, and he gave way to tears.

At seven o'clock precisely, the ruffian who looked like a brigand came to the cell, and for the second time said to the boys, "*Oust, la vermine,*" as he pushed them before him into the secretary's office. Was it possible that this creature once had a soul, capable of love and sympathy?

"Hello there, Monsieur Hector," said the police spy, with an obsequious smile, which is the most disgusting expression a human face could wear. "You overslept this morning."

"Oh, damn it. I go into the cafés every night with the firm vow that I won't touch a drop. But my friends come in and each one treats to a round, and before I know it it's after midnight. It's politeness that sends a man to the devil, I tell you." After delivering which wise speech, he turned his attention to the two boys before him.

"Of course, that's what all you young good-for-nothings say. 'Badly treated at home, kicked and beaten.' "

"Put them in the patrol wagon and send them to the court," was the verdict.

As the little vagabonds reached the court house another patrol wagon was being emptied of its mot-

ley crowd of prisoners, picked up in the lower quarters of Paris. Another followed and yet another, it seemed a parade of human beings who had sunk to the lowest depths of degradation,—beggars—thieves, drunkards—prostitutes. One after another they filed out, living witnesses of human misery. An old man in rags, the companion of a young girl who had tried to increase her youthful attraction by soiled ruffles and a flower-laden hat—old women with painted cheeks—pale men, with blood under their nails,—young men who looked like women in disguise. Almost all these miserable creatures staggered out of the police van, some weakened by hunger, others by drink and over-indulgence. The police had arrested them between the hours of one and five in the morning, at the cabarets, the public dance-halls, or in the parks, where some had thrown themselves on the benches with the hope of dying there, others to sleep off the effects of their intoxication. Paupers or blackguards, objects of pity, or wretches,—most of them were hideous creatures whose eyes stared vacantly and whose facial expressions were those of untamed animals. There was one in that depressing crowd whose beauty and gen-

tleness were enhanced by the sordid surroundings,—a young girl, in tatters, who guided the steps of an old drunkard. She had the face of an angel, and seemed like a beautiful flower blossoming in the mire. As the so-called arrivals came into the prison they were seized by the warden and roughly pushed along into a large dismal antechamber. They were divided into groups according to their offenses, the drunkards with the drunkards, the thieves with the other thieves, the young girls in another division by themselves. The chief, who was deferentially called "Monsieur l'Inspecteur," was a very important looking man who examined one group after another,—the spoils, as it were, of a night's debauchery in Paris. The confusion and noise of the crowd were deafening. Despite the constant commands of "Silence! Be quiet there!" the shuffling and tramping, the shrill, coarse whispers and the hideous shrieks did not cease. The women made a frightful uproar, laughing shamelessly among themselves. One old hag was most disgustingly drunk and kept repeating over and over again the refrain of an obscene song. In the midst of all this nauseating sensuality, stood a slim ethereal-looking woman who

had renounced all the pleasures of the flesh to gain an understanding of the spirit. An inhabitant of a different world she seemed, the Mother Superior of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, who had taken her place among the young "women of the streets," to whom she hoped to show a light. In another corner were five or six gamins, dry-eyed, and devouring with interest this spectacle of horror and depravity.

New comers were arriving constantly, and a fresh outburst of jeers and shrieks greeted each one. The crowd had become infuriated and order was impossible. The worst disturbers, some of them maniacal in their rage, were, after a difficult struggle, tied hand and foot and hurled into padded cells. The new recruits were assigned to their several groups: the women, scantily clad and bareheaded; the cabbies, coats torn in the street fights in which they had been arrested; ghastly looking ruffians who wore the cowardly, skulking expression of criminals caught in the act; and some few bohemians trying to create a favorable impression by adjusting their battered opera hats and buttoning their seedy frock coats.

After a time, the inspector succeeded in restoring a semblance of order in the sorting of this rabble.

Christian and Natole, who had been shoved into a corner, with about a dozen more young vagabonds, were now pushed into a cell, where their breakfast was given them,—a bowl of bread and drippings, not fit for a dog.

Two hours later they appeared in the children's court. The institution is in itself very good and the procedure simple. Each morning all the offenders who have been arrested in the streets of Paris are brought before a special judge assigned to the hearing of such cases only. Those who have reached their fourteenth year and are therefore held responsible for their acts are sent to a higher court. The parents of the younger children are summoned and admonished to be gentle and kind, for in nine cases out of ten the little runaway has been neglected and ill-treated, if not entirely abandoned. Then the child is given back to his family, unless they refuse to take him. If such be the case, or if the child have no parents, he is sent to a Truant School, where he must remain until he is of age.

The judge fills his office in as kindly and fatherly a way as possible. The appointment is always given to a man of integrity and breadth of mind, one who

fully understands social conditions and child nature, and whose ambition it is to do all in his power to fulfill his duty to the best of his ability and not merely to use it as a stepping-stone to a higher position. This good man does his very best, under the circumstances. But what does his best amount to? The children are either sent back to their miserable environment, where they see only bad example and cruelty, or are placed in a farming colony (in other words, a penitentiary), where they become depraved. What a violation of the principle that the punishment should be in proportion to the offense! All this misery for an offense which is comparatively trivial, even in the eyes of the law.

Grand philanthropies have been endowed in recent years to meet this very condition by men whose happiness consists in the amelioration of the woes of others. The whole world admires and blesses these benefactors of childhood who reclaim the misguided youth, take a keen interest in his betterment, and place him, if possible, in real homes among honest people who help and encourage his moral uplift. But in 1868, charity of this sort was practically unknown, unfortunately for Christian and Natole.

The law must be enforced no matter how hard and unjust it may be.

And if the boy is over fourteen, what is his fate? He is condemned as though he were a man and known later as a released convict, stigmatized for life. For those under fourteen, the consequences are even more severe. The formidable criminal becomes a galley slave, as it were, until he reaches his majority.

The public sanctions these conditions and admits their necessity, for without them society would fall to pieces like a house of cards. That may be, but I ask to be excused from admiring such a conception of justice, for I am beginning to believe that the only "Progress" which exists is the word itself on the sign-boards of cafés.

The judge who tried Christian and Natole was a man of nondescript personality whom a casual observer would consider very inefficient and uninteresting, but the man was kind at heart and intelligent; and pity for the poor little unfortunates before him shone in his thoughtful eyes. The clerk who kept the records sat near him, his attention centred upon manicuring his nails.

Christian was brought in by a municipal officer. The boy was in rags, trembling from head to foot, and trying to suppress his tears. The judge saw at a glance, though, that it was not the usual type of street Arab, bred in vice, with whom he had to deal. Just a moment before, Natole had been restored to his father who, though once a respectable cabinet-maker, had become a hopeless drunkard. He had remarried after the death of Natole's mother, and his present wife was a shrew who detested and abused the child of her husband's former marriage. The judge knew that Christian had been influenced by his companion and that this was his first experience as a vagrant. He reassured the boy, won his confidence, and listened compassionately to the sad story, which he knew was not a lie. Then he turned to his summoning officer.

"Has the father of this boy been notified?" demanded the Judge.

"Yes, sir."

"Has he come?"

"Yes, sir."

"Show him in."

At the mere mention of his father's name, the

recollection of all the blows and kicks he had received came back with such vividness that the boy cowered and slunk into a corner, and although the old Judge was accustomed to such scenes, he was moved to pity for the poor little lad.

Prosper Aubry, who had been found at his work, came into the court wearing an expression which substantiated Christian's story. His eyes were cruel and the line in his forehead was deeper than ever.

"Be seated," said the Judge. "Here is your son, who ran away from you several days ago. I know you have been greatly worried about him and that you notified the authorities at once of his disappearance. I have made inquiries about you and the reports have been favorable. But this child tells me that you treat him very cruelly. I ask you, is that true?"

The carpenter gave Christian a venomous look.

"Will Your Honor have the child taken out of the room for a few minutes?" he answered quietly. "I desire to tell you something of great importance."

"Granted. What is it?" asked the Judge.

"Please read this birth certificate," said Prosper. "'Christian Forgeat, son of Perrinette For-

geat, father not known.' This little brat is nothing to me: his mother was my mistress, that is all. She is dead, and I kept him just for decency. Do you blame me now for giving him a beating, when he deserved it?"

"An orphan—unloved," murmured the Judge, who knew all phases of human suffering.

"If you believe so, I won't deny it," said Prosper in his surly way. "But one thing is certain: that the very sight of him reminds me of his mother's former life; I was a fool to keep him after she died. The little loafer! it disgusts me to see him, and you can do whatever you please with him, only I never care to hear of him again. That is my right, isn't it?"

The most humble citizen inspired by the spirit of charity would have expostulated with Prosper Aubry and told him how wrong he was, but the old man to whom he told his story could answer only in the name of Justice.

"It is your legal right," he said, in a melancholy voice, "it is your inalienable right; but think for a moment that he is the son of a woman whom you loved, that you are the only being in the world who can look after him, that you have been very severe

with him and that his action is excusable. Be generous, keep him near you. No matter how hard your training may be, it will be better for him than that of the reformatory. The only refuge to which I could send him will have a baneful influence. He will go in as an innocent child, he will come out a depraved and hardened man. You are morally responsible for the future of that little boy. You are a good man. Will you doom that poor child to destruction, depriving him of all chance to become a respectable citizen?"

Prosper Aubry was unmoved by this appeal.

"Yes or no, I ask you; have I the right?" he demanded.

And as the Judge was silent and slowly shook his head affirmatively, Prosper went out, without another word.

"Make out the papers," he said to the clerk, in a trembling voice, for despite all he had seen and heard his capacity for sympathy and his understanding had not become blunted.

And that same evening, Christian Forgeat, the illegitimate orphan, was sent to the *Colonie du Plateau*, in the *Marne et Oise* district.

CHAPTER X

THE REFORMATORY

“A vos rangs!—fixe!”

This military order was issued in a superior way by a boy of fifteen, whose changing voice indicated his approaching manhood. He felt his importance as foreman of the brush-making industry, in which some of his younger brother convicts were engaged. Work was temporarily abandoned, and the boys were getting ready for the daily visit of the director of the “*Colonie du Plateau*.” The faces of the little inmates were unmistakably marked with the stamp of the prison life they led—the furrowed brow, a worn expression and sallow complexion indicated clearly their environment. During this temporary so-called rest, they stood before their work-benches, like soldiers, their hands nervously clutching the seam of their cotton overalls.

The training of the little prisoners was not only in tilling the soil and living in the open air as the



"HALT! ATTENTION!" THIS MILITARY ORDER WAS ISSUED IN A SUPERIOR WAY.

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name "farming colony" would imply, but included a wide range of duties. According to the intention of the founders of the colony outdoor life was to be the means of saving the boys who were sent there; in fact, all the students of economics and the child problem in its various phases agreed upon this point. Men who had studied the question and had investigated all the jails of Europe and the two Americas were of one mind in maintaining that this work in the fields was the only means of accomplishing the desired result. A long report on this subject had been published, substantiating this point of view, with convincing quotations from Theocritus, Virgil and the Abbé Jacques Delille, whose opinions still carry great weight. It was an indisputable truth that there was one and only one method of reclaiming the lost souls of the little vagabonds, and that was by hoeing potatoes and weeding out gardens, in a word, by coming into daily close contact with Nature.

This very excellent theory was not put into practice, however, for the directors bought several hundred acres of land on a high plateau which was exposed to destructive winds, and hence not at all suit-

able for the farming project. Those in charge decided that the high altitude and clear air would have quite as beneficial an effect, and prided themselves on their purchase.

A number of pale, sickly children from the suburbs came each day to work with spade and pick-axe to regain their lost health, but the result was disastrous. The "altitude and clear air" had a most pitiful effect on their underfed, thinly clad little bodies, and more than a dozen died of tuberculosis as a consequence of the exposure.

Needless to say, the directors did not admit their mistake, but what important body ever does? They were still convinced that it was a simple matter to effect a complete moral metamorphosis amid such ideal surroundings. The scheme was rigorously adhered to, but of course several modifications were allowed to suit the needs of the various temperaments of the boys. The stronger, or rather the least anaemic, of the little prisoners worked in the fields, and as a consequence of the severe winds shivered from head to foot. For those who could not stand this intense treatment, indoor occupation was provided. A blacksmith's shop, a joining-plane, and

cobbler's benches were introduced to accomplish reformation.

The idea was good. The young miscreant was to be restrained during his youth, but he would go out into the world at his coming of age with a trade, and thus not be a drag upon society. If he wished to work and live as an honest citizen, a fair chance was given him.

Unfortunately an idea, if it exist only in the abstract, does not accomplish very much. This triple expense was too high a price to pay even for moral regeneration, so the plans were changed again. Brushmaking was the only industry taught, as there was a ready market for its output.

The director in charge had devoted all his energies and surplus cash to pandering to those in political favor with the hope of a due reward. Of course this position was a great disappointment, but nevertheless he decided to make it yield as much as possible, hence the change of policy in his management. His conscience was the convenient warped kind, which interpreted all actions only as they benefited or injured him—the usual selfish egotistical political standpoint. What concern was it of his that the

children were enduring malnutrition, so long as his pockets were being filled in consequence?

The State suddenly realized that it was being robbed, and an investigation was ordered. Several commissioners were sent to make the necessary report—but the director had been warned in time, and was on his guard. He showed the visitors an account book, which tallied to the sou, a kitchen in perfect order, where they tasted the meal for the day, which was excellent. He satisfied them on every point as to his perfect management. What was the result? They returned to Paris, firm in the conviction that they must quell all doubts as to the director's honesty of purpose, and assure the powers that be of the noble work which was being accomplished. They conveyed the impression of simple rustic life with all its charms, and convinced the Chamber of Deputies that the institution was a credit to its founders, and a splendid example of French philanthropy.

But the director felt uneasy after this investigation and insisted that his political backers effect his transfer to a post in Indo-China. There he died, a victim of yellow fever.

Still the colony did not flourish. The children died like flies, the crops were miserable and the output of the workshops, poor. A most remarkable interest was again evinced by the Ministry and a second investigation ordered.

"All this mismanagement was due to lack of proper direction. A hand of iron is needed," was the sage comment of one member.

A man of this calibre must be found for the purpose of restoring order and prosperity in the decadent colony. Captain Caillou was the very man for the place, according to one senator, who did not understand human nature sufficiently to realize that the name of the man in question—caillou—was synonymous with the kind of heart he had—as hard as a stone. He had spent twenty-five years in Africa where he had enforced the most rigid discipline. He had never shed a drop of his blood on the battle field, but he was a past master in meting out punishment. For the slightest offense, he would order the poor wretch to be thrown into a pit, or bound hand and foot under the rays of the broiling African sun, which was hot enough to split a roasted chicken. This man certainly had the desired "hand of iron,"

which was to direct the destinies of the young vagabonds, whose only salvation lay in kindness and gentleness.

His predecessor, a weak political hanger-on, was an angel in comparison; as long as he was not personally annoyed nothing troubled him. But Captain Caillou was terrible because he was a man of duty, whose position had been given him on account of his ability, and he wanted to prove his worth to the administration. It was entirely a matter of conscience with him to send a child to the torture chamber for the least infraction of the rules, an act of integrity to place him in a dungeon or straightjacket.

This brute, who was a sort of honest man according to his lights, but very badly balanced in his conception of right and wrong, had thirty men to help him discharge his duties. His attitude toward them was as impulse directed, either very severe or extremely lenient. On one occasion he dismissed one of them for stealing a potato, but when another of them half killed a child, he closed his eyes to this offense because of his profound respect for the enforcement of authority.

Of course, the boys who were sent to the colony

were not easily led—but that was why they were there. Victims of the mighty law of heredity, or of unfortunately degrading home influence, or both, they were for the most part vicious and rebellious. They needed a firm hand, but deep in their warped and tainted little souls existed a demand for justice. Hardened as they were to ill treatment, they accepted the severe punishments, but authority to them meant tyranny. The director's assistants knew that their positions depended upon their cruelty in enforcing discipline, and as a consequence the existence of these unfortunate children, which had been miserable, became unbearable.

Let us be fair! From what class of people are the men chosen who are to have charge of a country's criminal classes? From among the lowest and least intelligent, without doubt. Those too dull to receive any other appointment become jailors—some are hangmen. But how can a higher type of man be found for this delicate task?

A man of superior intelligence and fine feeling might not understand the struggles and tendencies of a perverted child and with all his eager desire to do the right, might not know how to approach a

child whose moral sense was completely undeveloped. What a spirit of justice, what kindness and understanding are essential if an educator would make himself heard, obeyed and loved, by the children whom he hopes to reform! He must be a saint, an angel, patient, tactful and firm, to gain the confidence of his charges—a man with a sublime conception of charity—a Vincent de Paul! And instead these miserable defectives are placed in the hands of convict keepers.

“*A vos rangs—fixe!*” Monsieur le Capitaine Caillou entered Room No. 6 for the daily examination.

The dozen boys, whose regeneration was being effected by the making of brushes and curry combs by the gross (a miserable trade, by the way) had taken their military position. They stood like statues, not a muscle of their wan faces moving; their eyes were tense, not an eyelash winking.

The captain’s love of order must have been satisfied. He walked about, looking at one boy after the other, and piercing each one in turn with a devouring glance; he was not more severe than usual,

this was his accustomed manner. This furious look was a feature of his system of education.

"Christian Forgeat—Louis Râfle, come forward in order," commanded the Captain in a voice which had been coarsened by twenty-five years of absinthe before meals and whiskey after. The two boys stepped out of the file and stood before the director, in fear and trembling.

Six years of his life had gone by since Christian Forgeat was sent to the colony. Now fourteen years old, he had passed his primary grades and was considered a good pupil in the brushmaking trade to which he had been assigned because he was too weak to work in the fields. Despite the unmistakable stamp of the penitentiary life, this child of love was not homely. His features were refined, his teeth beautiful. His eyes were soft and black, and were animated by an expression of manly strength and purpose, instead of the usual look of deceit and cunning, so apparent in his companions. His thick, dark eyebrows marked him the aristocrat—the Lescuyer eyebrows which characterized his father and his grandfather who did not exist for

him. Of fine physique and tall for his age, he would have been very good looking if his face had not shown the pallor of the underfed. And one other defect spoiled his appearance—he was slightly lame.

Three years before, a keeper had broken Christian's leg by kicking him brutally. This offense was pardoned, but a few months later this beast was found attacking another child, and in order to avoid a scandal which would have been inevitable, the affair was hushed up and the man dismissed. And Christian Forgeat was maimed for life!

Louis Râfle, the other boy whom the director had called, was a large coarse-looking lad. His misshapen head and enormous hands indicated clearly his type. Nature had made him the more loathsome by giving him only one eye and a neck covered with scrofula. Poor unfortunate—why was he so punished?

"Ah—there you are, my boys," said the director.

The laryngitis of the old alcoholic director, due to his over indulgence in liquor, was another cause of his chronic bad temper.

"What is this I hear from the chief warden" he continued in his gruff voice; "some more fights—it



Clarence
Romer

"IF THAT EVER HAPPENS AGAIN, YOU WILL BE PUT IN THE DUNGEON."

seems you wanted to bite off Christian's nose," he growled at Louis Râfle.

And indeed, such had been the case. Louis Râfle despised Christian Forgeat. He loathed him with a maniacal hatred because he recognized that the other boy was more intelligent and prepossessing than he, that he knew how to conduct himself and had the hope of being free some day—while he, his idiotic brain told him, would always remain in the penitentiary, a prisoner. Louis Râfle detested Christian. The night before he had injured him again. The two boys had been in a death grapple, when the guard separated them.

"You do not expect me to ask you *why* you fell upon each other?" said the director. "You would only tell me a pack of lies, if I did. I do not allow such things in my colony, and even though Christian Forgeat has a good record, you will both have the same punishment—to spend a day in the punishment chamber. That will bring you to your senses; and if this ever happens again you will be put in the dungeon."

While the director continued his inspection the keeper in charge took hold of the two boys roughly

and led them to their torture chamber. They made no protest whatsoever, for punishment was no novelty to either of them. They seemed utterly indifferent, accustomed as they were to injustice. Louis Râfle's thick heavy face showed the triumph he felt, and he whispered to his companion:

"You see, mister hypocrite, it does not pay to be a *pante*; you get it the same as the *mariolles*."

There were two factions among the little prisoners, and an undying enmity existed between them. The *pante* in ordinary slang was the "goody goody," the *mariolle* was the cunning trickster who knew how to get the best of things. In a word, at the colony the *pante* and the *mariolle* were the good and the bad. *Le pante* (stigmatized with that name, by the others, as a sign of ridicule), submitted quietly to the harsh discipline, tried to do his best at all times, was studious and obedient. Generally the *pante* was a hypocrite, who crouched before the keepers, but secretly stirred up dissension among the boys. There were a few lads who had enough sense to accept their long monotonous sentence, to be deaf to the wicked plans and ideas of their fellows, and to close their eyes to the bad ex-

amples. Christian Forgeat was of the latter kind, of whom there were so few.

Although many excellent reforms have been introduced, the actual system of education of the wayward defective child is still barbarous. Alas! one cannot couple those words without a heartache—perverted childhood. A few men have retained a conception of morality, despite the negative influence of their childhood. I know one, who is an officer in the army at present, and there is another, who is struggling to make an honest living, and one cannot have too much respect for a man of that kind.

But the *mariolles* were the unmanageable, incorrigible lads, who might be likened to unsound fruit which had been spoiled in a heat; they entered the prison with vicious tendencies and left it completely depraved. That is the story of almost all these unfortunate children—and the lack of individual training and understanding is their undoing.

The penitentiaries for children are in reality the nurseries of robbers and murderers. The boys are shut off from the world for long dreary years with the hope that they will return some day to become

good citizens. When they reach their majority they are released—in a state of dissatisfaction and rebellion against their fate, their hearts full of wickedness and ready for crime to avenge their own lot.

There is now a new mode of treatment to meet the demands of this miserable pathetic problem. It is called the solitary system. Do you grasp the full meaning of that plan? Children, little children, are condemned to constant solitude, to absolute silence. At the *Petite Roquette*, each child has his own cell. By looking through a peep hole in the wall of their cell they may be seen imprisoned as though they were violently insane. It is indeed a sight to make one's hair stand on end. Each one is seated on a bench, before a shelf, fastened to the wall, dabbling at some sort of work. Even on Sundays at mass they are locked in a kind of cell, in a wooden turret, from which each can see only the officiating clergyman, but not catch even a glimpse of one another. The Chapel of the *Petite Roquette* is one of the curiosities of Paris. It is an ingenious instrument of torture. There is no doubt that the inventor was

a philanthropist who received a splendid salary during his lifetime for this indication of love for his fellow men.

This cellular system of education for the regeneration of perverted or abandoned children had such pitiful disastrous results that it was given up, and the colony idea reinstated. The agricultural training was resorted to again. Of course the problem is a difficult one to solve. The ideal solution is to place the child in a poor family, where he will grow up in an atmosphere of honesty, and will acquire a taste for work because he sees it about him. But even in the homes of the poor the father will knit his brows when he hears a plan proposed that he should bring up a little black sheep with his own children. There are rascals who take them, only to work them to death, and then their condition is worse than prison life and no better than their own so-called homes.

One must view the case from all points of view and try to be just. The sympathy and interest of those who make this problem their special study are undeniable; they draw up splendid plans, full of wisdom and even pity, but, though in the abstract these

are excellent, generally when put into practice, they are abominable.

The prisons to which these victims of fate and heredity are sent—and where they are subjected to every kind of physical torture and moral disaster—are generally entrusted to the care of guardians who have no more charity and gentleness in their hearts than there is nourishment in the miserable food-stuffs which are prepared under their direction.

And to come back to the case in point, to Christian Forgeat and Louis Râfle, the same punishment (and a very severe one at that) was administered to both, although the one was guilty of self defense, the other of wilful attack without reason. They were consigned to the “chamber of horrors”—a large underground room, around which the boys were compelled to march in Indian file, under the strict surveillance of a keeper. The march continued all day, except for two half-hour rests for meals, which were probably another indication of philanthropy.

The chamber of discipline is a form of punishment such as is used to chastise the most rebellious and vicious convicts, for it is one which they fear more than the dungeon. And in the reformatory

children have been known to commit a more serious offense in order to be placed in the black cell, rather than to be sent to this room. The former is terrible enough. The child is all alone in the dark, fed on bread and water, and sleeps on the cold stone. But at least he can sit down, with his back against the wall, and rest and even fall asleep.

But think of walking up and down without cessation!—an exhausting unnerving march, which causes a dull throbbing pain in the brain. And such treatment is supposed to effect regeneration!—the only result can be a greater degeneration. If such torture be the consequence of making faces behind a keeper's back, there is no choice left to the culprit but to break the keeper's face the next time he feels so inclined, in order to bring about a greater punishment which will at least include a rest. This situation would have its humorous aspect were it not so pathetic.

CHAPTER XI

THE DISCIPLINE CHAMBER

CLOC—cloc—cloc—cloc! The wooden shoes of the culprits resounded heavily and rhythmically on the flagging of the discipline chamber. One behind the other they marched in lockstep, thirty miserable youngsters, and continued without a halt. Christian, who brought up the rear, fell behind from time to time, on account of his lameness.

"Keep up there, no lagging, you loiterer," growled the keeper from his comfortable chair in the middle of the room.

"Attention," he added, "don't skip the corners."

Were they to be blamed, for attempting to cheat a bit, to shorten their torture by rounding the corners? But the keeper detected the trick.

These hideous children, marched, marched, marched—paying a heavy penalty for their slight misdemeanors. And indeed they were hideous! It

seems a harsh word to use, but their eyes alone would justify the statement, dull and heavy as they were, never lighting up for a moment and comparable only to unpolished window glass. Every face in turn reminded one of some animal, a ram's nose, or a martin's jaw, or a snout like a pig gave that impression.

Have pity on them, you splendid young fellows and happy men who read these lines; sympathize with the ugliness and stupidity of these poor unfortunates. Who is to be blamed for their condition? Not they—surely.

Cloc—cloc!—they shuffle on and are physically and mentally exhausted. Their feet are weakened, their legs are as heavy as lead and the strain has distended the muscles of their necks. They cannot fight against the inevitable, and still they continue to shamble.

In the enervation of the monotonous march, Christian was thinking of his long hard captivity. His mind was filled with recollections from the time he first saw the colony, (when he had not yet reached his ninth year) until the present. And suddenly an instinctive repugnance asserted itself, and he found himself loathing the long plaster buildings, and the

little chapel which was a wretched hovel, surmounted by a cross; hating with fierce intensity the stretch of barren plain, spreading out in unbroken evenness on every side, and sparsely dotted here and there with an occasional stunted elm tree. It looked like his own crude landscape drawings.

How well he remembered his first day, when he had been examined as though he were a beast and a suit of sacking clothes had been given him to put on, marked with the number by which he was henceforth to be known. How vividly he recalled the first time he had been called "Christian Forgeat"—whereat he was astonished.

"But my name is Aubry," he protested; "my father is Prosper Aubry the carpenter." The keeper looked at the commitment paper again and shrugged his shoulders.

"Your name is Forgeat," he said. "Aubry is the name of the man your mother lived with, and who does not want to be bothered with you any longer. Do you understand? And I'm pretty sure, he has good reasons for it, too."

Of course the child did not understand, but accepted the change of name quietly. It seemed a joy-

ful piece of news, that this man, who had beaten and kicked him, was not his father.

But alas! the boy came to know very soon what an illegitimate child was. "*L'homme qui vivait avec maman*" was the most commonplace expression heard in the Colony, and it did not take very long for him to become familiar with the lowest aspect of the unwritten law. Into his young impressionable mind were poured all kinds of vulgarity and contamination, with that instinctive hatred for purity which impels young street Arabs to write bad words and draw obscene pictures on the public walls. The boy knew in full detail the shameful secrets and illicit passions of the lowest order. And he had not yet reached his tenth year!

One cannot help thinking in contrast of the pure young child, the happy offspring of honest parents who love and guard him, and watch over his troubled sleep. Often the father will touch the perspiring little hands, and look anxiously at the mother to see if she is alarmed about the condition. How wisely these guardians try to answer the curious questions which natural curiosity prompts the child to ask; how dear to their hearts is the little one's innocence!

They observe the tender unfoldment of the child's mind as though it were a budding flower. Among the little vagabonds there are some, perchance, who are as innocent as the child of happier environment, whose purity is accidentally preserved. But their fate is the same as that of the other Arabs—the lily is in time besmirched.

Cloc, cloc, cloc, cloc—Christian's retrospection continued. How he recalled his experience when, a few years after his commitment, he had lain in a clean white bed at the infirmary, his broken leg encased in plaster and splints. Through the brutality of a fiend, from whose ferocious grip he had tried to wrest himself, he had been beaten, bruised and maimed for life! He saw himself, resting quietly, in clean clothes, cared for by a sweet young nurse, who was so kind to him. An overwhelming gratitude and peace stole over the lad.

And then came the thought of his one and only friend, the one human being, who had ever seemed to take a personal interest in him, who had come frequently to visit him at the hospital, who sat at the foot of the cot, looked at him lovingly and spoke to him affectionately. This man was Simon Bénoît,

the teacher of the School at the Colony, a consumptive, whose voice had almost disappeared. He could scarcely make himself heard in the classroom, and had been sent there only because his salary was consequently small, and he was "good enough for those children," thought the director.

This young man had ideals, and his cherished hope was to reform at least one of the boys in his charge. He studied them carefully, as they sat before him on their hard black benches, and a pity for their unfortunate lot welled up in his heart. It seemed to him that Christian was the most intelligent and the least warped of any. There was a light in his eyes, which gave evidence of a soul, and so the dying man chose him as the one whom he would try to save.

As one tries to stir up a dim fire, so Simon Bénoît little by little put life into the little spark of conscience which existed in Christian Forgeat, until he saw his labor of love bear fruit. It filled him with joy to tend the tiny seeds of kindness and honesty which he had planted.

Oh ! little Christian could never forget him. The dear face and weak feeble body of his one friend were hallowed and alone in a niche of his memory.

There he would always remain, and again he saw vividly the thin finger of the feverish hand, which pointed out to him the word of consolation and hope on an otherwise blackened page.

Cloc, cloc, cloc, cloc—the thoughts kept crowding thick and fast into the boy's mind, memories of the long endless years of misery and suffering. Each season in turn had left its bitter stamp. The winter was severe, the spring bleak, the summer oppressively hot, and the fall muddy, the time of dying leaves. And ever before him was the same dismal hovel, which was the only home he knew. He thought of the number of hours he had spent on work which he hated, every fifteen or thirty minutes of which were assigned, with never a deviation except for punishment.

Since the death of his idolized Bénoît, no one had given him a friendly word, for he was despised by the *mariolles*, who suspected him of being a traitor, and of playing the hypocrite. Christian, for his part, had absolutely no confidence in any of his associates, being disgusted with their filthy talk and indecency.

"How long my childhood is!" he thought, "will

it never end? And even when I am through here, what will become of me?"

At eighteen, the boys began their military service, and they eagerly looked forward to the experience.

For just a moment this seemed a ray of hope to Christian, and then with crushing power came the realization of his lameness, which would prevent his enlisting. Even that resource was denied him. He did not excel at manual work, that he knew, and at best he would be a very inferior workman. He was terror stricken when he thought of what would become of him after his release. Although he had suffered tortures there, he shuddered to think of himself applying for work, with only an ex-convict's certificate for recommendation. Of life and his fellows he knew nothing, but as a result of unfortunate training he felt instinctively that existence in the world must be difficult and trying, and even the idea of his freedom became a torture now.

Not a friend in the world to turn to! Of one thing he was certain and that was that he would avoid any of the Colony associates whom he might chance to meet, when once he was free. He felt sure they would travel the road of evil, for their

vicious habits and thoughts even at the present time justified his conclusion.

"Say, Jules, when your time is up here, what are you going to do?" he had asked one of the quietest lads one day.

"Me? I'm going to be thief, like my father," answered Jules, with a wicked hard laugh.

Yes, he would escape them surely—but where to find work was the problem, at whose door could he knock? When he had confided that fear to Simon Bénoît, the poor man had grown sad and said:

"I shall not be here to help you then, my dear child, you will be all alone. It will require great courage and perseverance on your part, but you will always try to be an honest boy, I am sure; you will see that that is the only way to be happy."

Yes, yes, his young heart cried out, he would try, he would try, that was his promise to his dying friend, he would do everything to the best of his ability and eat only the bread which he had earned.

Surely there was good material in the make up of a boy who could reach such a conclusion under the existing circumstances. As he marched on, he urged himself to summon up all his courage for his future

struggles. His head was lowered, his shoulders stooped and his feet excoriated and bleeding.

Cloc, cloc, cloc, cloc! Suddenly the door was opened. The head keeper stood outside.

“Halt!—all the punishments are at an end. Go to your rooms and put on your new shoes—then form a line of march and be quick about it, do you hear?” was the command.

“What had happened?” the boys wondered. Something unusual surely. Ah! an inspector was about to come unexpectedly. And so it proved.

His arrival was particularly auspicious just at this time, if only he had been a man who could read conditions. To-day the Colony was especially horrible. Even the dull November sky, with its heavy clouds was in keeping with the surroundings. The children were thoroughly filthy and their little bodies shivered under their thin blouses. An awful odor of suet came up through the tinder-box kitchen door. Conditions were truly revolting.

But we need not worry, the director did not lose his head; he was well aware of the assumed finer sensibilities of some of the examiners, and he guarded against impressions which might offend

them. There was only a half hour in which to get the place into proper order. Of course the time of the Inspector General was mapped out to the minute, so the examination would not last long, he knew.

The important personage appeared on the scene and the director introduced him with great ceremony and all due respect to his assistants; then he monopolized his attention and endeavored to create a favorable impression.

"And first of all, Monsieur, you may show me the account books," said the Inspector.

That part of the inspection did not worry the director, his books being kept up to date and balanced to the centime.

In a second, the big Superintendent was seated before the desk in a sea of memoranda and papers. He knew very little of accounts, but assumed a very important air, put on his glasses and looked them over cursorily. Then in a deep voice he said:

"Excellent, very good indeed," and that was over.

Captain Caillou understood how to handle this man and modestly began a eulogy of his own work. At the same time this gave the children a chance to change their clothes.

"Never has the Colony been in so flourishing a condition. The death rate has greatly diminished. (No wonder, all the weaker children having passed away, it was the case of the survival of the fittest). The harvest of turnips had been splendid, and the regeneration of the boys had been remarkable, the pursuit of farming developing the character and bringing out the latent beautiful traits in the children, etc., *ad lib.*

"Very fine, very fine," repeated the Inspector General.

The Captain continued to amuse the unwelcome visitor by trifling episodes. He knew that the entire stay would last but half an hour.

"O, I must not forget to give you two important documents before you leave, monsieur l'Inspecteur."

The first was a letter from a farmer who thanked the director for sending him so capable a farm hand as Hippolyte Mantué, a youth of fifteen. He did not mention however that he paid him a paltry salary and did not feed him as well as he did his swine. The second was from the boy himself and the deceit of it was almost self evident. It was teeming with happy reminiscences of the boy's stay at the Colony

and of gratitude to Captain Caillou for his kindness. It was a most opportune time for the Captain to show those letters, for three days later the boy ran away from his employer, after having destroyed all the furniture in his bedroom and stolen a bag filled with twenty-franc pieces.

"Very fine, very fine indeed," repeated the Inspector.

The half-hour was almost over.

"Will you continue your examination?" asked the Captain suavely.

Needless to say, only one or two floors were shown him, the blacksmith's shop, which always created a favorable impression; and the brush making factory—"a most remunerative feature for the administration, sir."

"Here is a very remarkable piece of work which one of our boys is making—a horsehair portrait of the Chief of State."

"Very curious and very well done, indeed," was the comment.

Suddenly martial music was heard. What a splendid surprise, the Marseillaise! The Inspector was

now conducted to the path, where the boys stood in perfect order, presenting arms.

"Shoulder arms!" was the command.

This was indeed a triumph, this parade of the little vagabonds. With their new blouses, polished shoes, and hats pulled way down over their faces, their appearance was not bad. The Inspector could not distinguish, nor did he trouble to read the expression of vice and hatred on the faces before him, nor the hideous look in their eyes.

Seen from a distance and in a body they looked well cared for and as clean as though they had stepped out of band boxes. Alas! although they were only children they knew the deceit that was being practiced.

They went through the military manoeuvres, without a mistake, and with absolute precision. The drums rolled, the fanfare of trumpets resounded. There was even a young thief among them who was helping out as drum major. The company marched past with dignity, up and down they went, en masse, in sections, to the right, and to the left. At the command "Halt," they stood still before the Inspector.

He was delighted, astonished and expressed his enthusiasm.

"Your charges conduct themselves like veterans, Captain," he said, and Captain Caillou knew that he would receive an excellent report for his work at the Colony.

While this parade was in progress, one of their number watched it from a hidden angle in the wall. The little lame boy, Christian Forgeat, could not take part, and he stood silently observing the farce. Then he saw his companions disperse and once away from the eagle eye of the master, all their pent up energy burst forth. The little outcasts, over-heated by the exercise, sauntered back to the house, joking about the exhibition and laughing aloud.

Christian looked earnestly at his companions of misery and never had they seemed to him so distasteful and hideous. With his dislike, there was mingled a confused pity and even a strange subtle attraction. He understood the hatred which poisoned their young lives, and the ungovernable temper which their protests against Cruel Fate had created. In his childish heart he felt that they would avenge

their lot in some way; he even made excuses for them, they had suffered so much.

Then he grew introspective again. Wasn't he a goody goody and a coward to accept abuse so weakly? Wasn't there more loyalty in their cynicism, more bravery in their revolt? Oh! how weak and insufficient were the seeds of honor and duty, which Simon Bénoît had planted in the barren soil of the little soul! And his friend was not here now to cry, "Courage! be brave, my boy."

Just a little while before, when he had submitted to the unjust cruel punishment of the discipline chamber, he had taken an oath to hold to the teaching of his one friend, to persevere in carrying out his advice. And now, as he saw all his miserable companions in a group, he was fascinated by the state of mind they seemed to exude, infected with it as it were, and an uncontrollable desire to be one of them seized hold of the boy—an irresistible impulse to march with the army of crime and revenge.

CHAPTER XII

THE FATHER'S REPENTANCE

THE development of the unfortunate lame boy has absorbed so much of our attention that we have temporarily forgotten to wonder what has become of his father, Christian Lescuyer, who entered upon his career untroubled by a crime which he thought honor and respectability justified.

Has he been happy since he abandoned Perrinette Forgeat to a miserable lot, from which death had mercifully removed her? In the working out of the law of cause and effect, could he be at peace with himself and the world, when through fault of his an innocent little human being was suffering mental torture and moral degeneration? Amateur students of the vagaries and irony of Fate, do not be surprised to hear that he was miserable.

When he returned to his home at Caen, he was enthusiastic about some renovations which he planned for it. The old ancestral house was sadly in need of repair and his father had at last decided to

refurnish it. With Christian's aid he succeeded in making it look somewhat less dismal and funereal than formerly.

Of course, his father insisted that he pay his respects to their Sunday afternoon friend, Madame Taburet, and Christian was amazed to see that her niece had improved greatly in appearance.

During his absence old Lescuyer had kept his cherished plan in mind and accomplished as successful a siege in his way, as had Vauban, when he effected peace for Louis XIV with Maëtricht, and all that was left for the king to do was to make a triumphal entry into the city and accept the homage of the people for his splendid victory.

The heart and the very important dowry of Camille, were offered to Christian Lescuyer, like the keys of a city, on a silver tray. He accepted both willingly, and the wedding date was set.

The engagement was a short one, and soon the day of the happy event arrived. The coincidences which occur in one's life time are such as to convince even the least philosophical of us, that our destinies hang on a thread, whose deflection in one direction or another is caused by the slightest breeze.

As Christian Lescuyer was dressing for his wedding, the daily mail came. He scanned the miscellaneous assortment of bills and congratulations hastily, and was about to throw them all into his desk, when a coarse envelope caught his eye. He looked for a moment at the address written in an untutored hand and it brought back a host of recollections, which he supposed were buried fathoms deep in a corner of his brain labelled "Lived Experiences." A shade of vexation crossed his face. That writing had caused him annoyance before—it was Perrinette's.

The little florist told her dear friend that she was the proud mother of a fine strapping little son. His birth had been duly recorded and he had been baptized Christian. "I hope that will not displease you," she had written. But not a word did this timid honest girl mention of their past, nor a request that he provide for their child as he had promised, in fact the tone of the letter showed that the writer felt she was communicating with her superior. Nevertheless the receipt of this letter at so inopportune a time made Christian Lescuyer violently angry.

"I wonder if she thinks I consider myself the

father of her child." His brain repeated mechanically the thought with which he had succeeded in deluding himself when he abandoned her. He threw her letter into the fire.

An hour later, he knelt at the side of Mademoiselle Camille Letourneur, and before the élite of Caen became her husband.

No doubt at just about the same time Perrinette watched the old accoucheuse arrange the cards on her bed, and devoured hopefully the words of prophecy which promised that the "jack of diamonds (Christian) would soon appear on the scene and take care of the "queen of hearts" (Perinette); but the "jack of diamonds" and the "queen of hearts" never met again in this world.

The "jack of diamonds" was named for the position of assistant judge at Bayeux and went to live there with his young wife. By nature a hard worker, he did not even wait until his honeymoon was over to plunge into his law books.

"Lescuyer is a conscientious fellow" was the comment of his colleagues, and the women agreed that his wife was a good housekeeper. Excellent traits, surely—what more could one desire for a happy

home and a successful future? The death of old Lescuyer and Madame Taburet within a few weeks of each other made both Christian and his wife independently rich. Their world was well satisfied with them and found no reason for criticism. Public opinion, which we know is always inspired by justice, believes that wealth without virtue is immoral, and conversely. The charitable view point would sanction the combination of money with goodness, and poverty with sin. Unfortunately the opposite coupling often occurs, and the public in order not to contradict this beautiful principle closes its eyes to any violation of it. It cannot see the vice of the rich and the virtue of the poor and wisely asserts that "all things are arranged for the best."

The future certainly looked bright for this fortunate couple. Christian Lescuyer had realized his dream of a correct and irreproachable existence. Once in a while, but so seldom that it does not deserve to be mentioned, his conscience would prick him on Perrinette's account. But this reminder of his life in Paris was as fleeting as a summer cloud, which passes across the sun and obscures it for just an instant. He was never tired—hard workers have

no time to even think of fatigue. Public esteem was his—and to complete the perfect picture he had a sweet intelligent wife whom he cared for and who adored him. Was there any detail omitted which might have been more conducive to domestic happiness? No, none whatever.

Camille Lescuyer looked forward eagerly to the time when she would become a mother—the event which was to be the crowning point in the happiness of the young couple. Unfortunately she gave premature birth to her child and it lived only a few days.

Poor little woman—she, who had all the necessary qualifications for perfect motherhood, might never have the opportunity to make use of her highest functions. Her attending physician had warned her husband that her life would be endangered if ever she became pregnant again.

After several years, when her health was much improved, she surprised her husband one day by confiding to him that she was “enceinte.” He was delighted, for he desired to be the father of a family.

“Take good care of yourself, dear, remain at home as much as possible,” was the advice of her

well meaning friends. And Camille followed their instructions to the letter. She never left the house, scarcely lifted her arm, was afraid to move and spent all her time reclining in an invalid's chair!

Christian hurried home from court every day to inquire tenderly how she felt. The contrast is appalling when one considers the solicitude which attended the prenatal condition of the one child, and then reflects upon the miserable influence which was being brought to bear at the same time upon Christian, Lescuyer's first-born, the little vagabond of the streets of Paris.

The accouchement of Madame Lescuyer had very tragic consequences. Her baby was a sickly puny little girl, whose every breath was an effort, and the mother died without ever having seen the child for whom she had given her life.

On the eve of her death, Christian Lescuyer received a splendid appointment in Caen. He was happy, at the prospect of returning to his ancestral home with his wife and child, but Fate decreed that he should go back to it a widower, with a delicate little daughter.

The best doctors the town afforded were called in

to give their diagnosis of the child's condition, and they were all of the opinion that the chances for her thriving were slim.

"Perhaps with the greatest care she might live, but it was doubtful."

Christian Lescuyer was in despair. He could not even work, but sought relief in a hobby, closing himself up for hours at a time in the library, where he made an intensive study of ancient customs. But every once in a while the recollection of his misfortune filled him with an inexpressible sadness, and he could not concentrate his mind on his work. Grief overmastered him, self-pity conquered him—and he would fall forward heavily on the quarto volume open before him, sobbing convulsively. The man typified abject misery and suffering.

Only a violent diversion from self and sorrow could save him, an activity which might arouse the man. As soon as the Franco-Prussian war became a reality he enlisted, not from a motive of patriotism, but instead impelled by the urgent need of doing something, and perhaps with a secret desire of being killed to end his misery. He served in the army of the Loire, fought like a man who wants to die, and

was twice wounded. After peace was declared, he added the soldier's decoration to his judicial robes.

As a result of his military experience he had become more resigned and calmed, but was not reconciled to his lonesome life. The health of his little daughter was somewhat improved, and in consequence his interest in his work revived a bit. At last Time, the universal consoler, ameliorated his suffering, and his friends felt that with all propriety they might now urge him to remarry.

"Why not marry a settled girl of about thirty years of age? She need not be rich for surely he had enough for both. Then he would know that his little Marie was having the proper attention, and he would be happy again." Christian listened quietly and saw the wisdom of their advice.

One October night, when little Marie's life was despaired of he turned from her cradle to the library more despondent than ever. He knew instinctively that his child could not live. As he entered the large unfriendly room, with its endless rows of books in dark bindings, he became greatly agitated. As if to intensify his condition, (for color has an acknowledged effect on the emotions), the

lamp on his desk threw out a sickly green light which scarcely illuminated the work table. He hurriedly lit the two candles on the mantel piece, and as he did so his own reflection stared back at him from the mirror above. He stood riveted to the spot, astonished by his own changed appearance.

"My God—how thin and old I have grown!" he cried, "how gray my hair is!"

And indeed it was true—his bushy eyebrows, the Lescuyer distinguishing mark, made him look like the reincarnation of his austere unsympathetic father. He resented his likeness to the man whom he had never learned to love, before whom as a child and a young man he had always experienced an uncontrollable fear. Out of tune with himself and the world, he indulged in a sad reverie and long retrospection.

Since his wife died, he had often thought, with growing remorse, of his treatment of Perrinette. Alas! it was due to his intense fear of his father's anger that he had abandoned her eight years earlier. This was the one great sin of an otherwise blameless life, and little did he realize how far-reaching its

effects had been, and how terrible they were destined to become.

To-night, when misery (largely due to self-pity) had softened his heart, he realized that he had been cruel and very unjust to her.

"As thou sowest, so shalt thou reap"—he thought perhaps all his misfortune was due to his sin of eight years ago. The death of his wife, his sad widowerhood—the delicacy of his only child—were not all these sorrows an expiation?

Christian Lescuyer was religious by nature; he believed in an avenging Justice. Having sinned, he was punished and he bowed to the will of the Most High. And the irony of it all was that his friends advised him to remarry—to become happy again!

Happiness? It was not for him, he was unworthy of it, he had forfeited all claim to it by his cruelty. He repeated his harsh arraignment of self—it was nothing short of villainy to abandon a woman whom he had loved, when she most needed his protection. As a judge he had passed sentence, depriving men of their liberty, accusing them harshly for trifling infringements of the law. If his own offense was not

against the Code, then surely it was punishable in the eyes of conscience.

But what was he to do? In all justice did it suffice that evil had received its due punishment when possibly there was a chance for reparation? If he were to kneel in the confessional, what would the priest order him to do? Not only to do penance, to give to charity, to read his prayers, but to search for the victims of his wickedness and to neutralise its effects in every possible way.

The possibility of retribution and consequent peace gripped hold of the man's mind. Yes, he would try—that was clearly his duty, and the only course open to a man of honor. He would find Perrinette and her child (in woeful misery probably) and better late than never give them the monetary assistance of which they were no doubt pitifully in need.

Whether or not he were the father of the little Christian, of whose birth Perrinette had written, was of little importance. He would take complete charge of the boy's education, become his guardian, try to love him—would try to love him as though he were in reality his own son. Then and then only could he find the peace of mind he sought—his sin

would at last be atoned for. As if he were asking a reward for his own goodness, he fell on his knees and prayed to the all merciful Father to spare his little Marie's life.

It was toward the end of October when the judges were granted their vacation. Eight days more and Christian Lescuyer would be free to go where he pleased. His eagerness for repentance was still strong, and he decided to go to Paris to realize it.

But in finding a person of whom one has lost track the proverbial "needle in the haystack" applies in greater degree to Paris than perhaps to any other large city in the world. In vain Christian Lescuyer sought out all the old haunts, without finding a trace of Perrinette and her little boy.

Although he had destroyed her letter the day he married, he had a vague recollection of the name and address of the accoucheuse at whose house it was written. But Mother Lagasse had died two years before, and her successor knew nothing of this one of the many girls who had spent ten days of their lives in the old woman's charge, and then disappeared into the big world. Then he went to the little house on the Rue d'Ulm, where Perrinette had lived,

but the rickety building had been torn down. He went to the police as a last resort and searched numerous records, but all to no avail—not the slightest trace was to be found.

At this time the little Christian was living with his so-called father Aubry, after his mother's death. He carried a name which was not his, was on the verge of becoming a vagabond and later, a charge of the State. Had Christian Lescuyer's impulse for atonement but asserted itself six months later, he might have found the name he sought in the jail book "Christian Forgeat, sent to the colony for vagabondage." But just at this time chances for finding the child were less likely than those for discovering a small bird in a vast forest. All efforts were fruitless.

After a week of tiring and unavailing search, he decided to return to Caen, but made up his mind to visit his old friend, the sculptor, before he left. François Donadieu, who had married Héloïse several years before, was now recognized as a master and had executed some excellent and highly remunerative commissions. He was earnestly engaged in perfecting a model for a splendid equestrian statue when

he was disturbed by a knock at the door of his studio. He looked up to see a man on the threshold whom he thought a stranger.

The saddened old face with its heavy gray eyebrows seemed entirely unfamiliar to him until a sudden trick of memory supplied him with a clue to the identity of Christian Lescuyer.

The artist knew nothing of the pathetic circumstances of his friend's life—the death of his wife and the illness of his little daughter. "You must dine with us," he exclaimed as he kissed Christian affectionately.

Then followed an hour of reminiscence, and "do you recall this, do you remember that," were part of every sentence. Christian felt himself unbending a bit, as he sat opposite his old friend, and forgotten incidents came back of a time when he too had felt that he was alive. Toward evening they left the studio arm in arm to go to Donadieu's home in the Rue Bréa. The little place was very unpretentious, but the contentment of the loving couple who lived in it made it seem as beautiful as a palace. Héloïse, as happy as ever, but very much stouter than she had been, was setting the table as the two entered the

little dining-room. She, too, kissed Christian affectionately and then hurried to prepare the supper.

As soon as they sat down at the table, a large cat of an ugly rust color, jumped up on the tablecloth and made himself entirely comfortable beside Madame Donadieu's plate.

"Ah! there you are, you lazy animal," she said. "Come here this minute," she continued as though she were speaking to her beloved child, and kissed the big tom cat lovingly between the ears. He accepted this caress with utmost indifference as though he were accustomed to it.

"Don't be shocked, your Honor," said Donadieu; "allow me to present 'Bonnet à poils' who is as important a member of this household as its master. You know we are not in the fashionable world, and that cat must have his place at this table, otherwise the mistress would not be able to digest her dinner. And he must have his share served on the side of her plate."

"But what can one do," he added with a touch of sadness in his voice, "if one has no children one must be satisfied with animals."

Throughout the meal, Donadieu, who was so

happy in seeing his old friend again, was very amusing and told a thousand and one funny little incidents of their former good times. Even Christian, who thought he had forgotten how to be merry, smiled. The good natured Héloïse laughed heartily, but not for a moment did she neglect Bonnet-à-poils, who in her opinion, was a most important member of that dinner party. She gave him the choicest morsels, while she talked to him, calling him a hypocritical pussy cat, and accusing him of all sorts of treachery, at which he did not seem a bit offended.

Christian felt it his duty to stroke the cat's head and admire his fur.

"Donadieu is right," said Héloïse, "we could not love a baby more than we do this cat. He worried us terribly last winter—you know he is not young any more, past seven years. Just think, the poor thing had the rheumatism so badly and that idiot of a veterinary prescribed salicylate, but I wouldn't have it. They say it goes to the head, and Bonnet-à-poils is so intelligent, I couldn't take the risk!"

Christian left his friends, delighted with the simplicity of their home life and their complete happiness.

"How content Donadieu is!" he thought with a sigh of regret and envy as he sped along in the train toward Caen. "Ah! those who accept life as it comes are wise, and those who do not sacrifice their conception of love on the altar of public prejudice and renounce their chance for happiness to meet the demands of prevailing social customs live while they live.

"As for myself—my one chance for the right life is at an end—I wished to atone for the crime of my youth, but I am destined to continue with that load on my conscience."

He came back and became more than ever the hermit in his dismal so-called home. Study and work were his companions. His little Marie, though very delicate, was growing up under the care of servants. The years rolled on monotonously. The respect of all the town was his—people admired his honesty, sympathized with his loneliness, and wondered at his devotion to his wife's memory. He was considered an excellent judge and was again promoted to a higher position in the judiciary.

His future prospects were brilliant, but his realized ambitions were of no value to him, because he

had no one with whom to share his success. In fact his only reason for devotion to his work was that he might find in it a diversion from his incurable sadness. As time went on this remorse lessened. Nevertheless, during his long nights of solitary work he often stopped to reflect, and his torturing thoughts made his mind their prey. Somewhere in the world he knew there was a child whom he had abandoned to his misfortune, and who in his turn no doubt cursed the father whom he had never known. Keen anguish gripped the unhappy man and crushed his spirit.

Perhaps his heavy heart beats were the echoes of the steps of his little son, who was marching up and down until he almost fell from exhaustion in the discipline chamber at the Colony.

CHAPTER XIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR WORK

IT was about six o'clock on the evening of a very hot day at the end of August. Le Quai d'Horloge, on which the oldest part of the Palais du Justice stands, was absolutely deserted. The only persons about were a soldier on guard before the entrance of the conciergerie and one idler who stood, with his chin resting on his arms, intently watching the current of the Seine.

In this section of the quais of Paris there are no lower wharfs, and in consequence the wall extends perpendicularly into the stream for a considerable distance. Here the river is narrower than in any other place. Its current is very swift and rushes on with fascinating rapidity. The spot is very dangerous, particularly for small boats, and even a large vessel is subject to risks. The first arch, that of the Pont-au-Change, is called "the devil's arch," in the sailors' vernacular. More than one raft and several

sailing barges have been dashed to pieces there by the violence of the under current.

If the loiterer who stood watching the surging rapid water had a desire to commit suicide, he had chosen the proper place.

He was young, of slight physique and dark complexion, and had a thick crop of black hair, which was visible under his cheap straw hat. His old gray suit, which had become faded and shapeless in its long service, was almost threadbare, but the clean hands, spotless linen and polished shoes gave evidence of an attempt to preserve self respect, to be as presentable as possible.

With a conscious effort to tear himself away from the fascination of the stream and the train of thought it suggested, the young man left the spot determinedly. He was lame. His features were refined, but his face was pale and sunken; his eyes were large and dark, his eyebrows bushy. His facial expression revealed extreme moral and mental distress.

He glanced sadly at the old towers of the palace, and then although he was overcome by fatigue and he knew the current had a mysteriously depressing

attraction for him, he returned to the place he had just left, resumed his position with his head buried in his hands and remained for a long time in that dejected attitude.

This unhappy man, out of employment, (like whom there are unfortunately so many in any large city), was none other than Christian Forgeat, now a free citizen according to law. He had reached his majority four years before, and since that time had been struggling with the difficulties of making an honest livelihood.

What effect had the system of regeneration which was enforced at the “Colonie du Plateau” exerted upon the morals of Christian Forgeat? What were the influences which had been brought to bear upon the character and intelligence of this poor devil by the uncontrollable fury of Captain Caillou, the fierce brutality of his assistants, the dungeon and the daily contact with other vagabonds, nearly all of whom were completely depraved? Had the agricultural training imbued him with a love for the arts or stirred his imagination, as the theory had promised? Or had he even carried away an enthusiasm for the trade of brushmaking?

This wonderful programme for moral uplift, including the farming idea, the brush-making industry and the cruel treatment, this perfect method of education for the abandoned and truant child, would have made of Christian Forgeat, as it did of his associates, a scoundrel of the worst and lowest order, had it not been for the chance influence in that frightful Colony of the consumptive young teacher, Simon Bénoît, who had manifested a great interest in the boy. His memory kept bright the little flame of honor which still burned in the soul of the unfortunate man.

Christian had reached the age of reason when he lost this dear, dear friend, and, though he spent several years in the miserable atmosphere of the Colony after Bénoît's death, it was as if the memory of his dear teacher guarded his conscience, for he left the Colony at his coming of age not corrupt and dissolute like the other boys.

When he was released he hoped to keep as a reserve fund his little sum of earnings in the brush-making factory which amounted to a scant hundred francs, for from them had been deducted the cost of material.

Christian still felt the influence of Simon Bénoît ten years after his death. His kindness was such as could never be forgotten. All the poor consumptive's savings amounted to twenty louis, and these he left to his favorite pupil, with his watch, a heavy old fashioned "oignon," which he requested his heir to keep always. When the time came for Christian's blessed release from the Colony, the legacy was given him, and he left feeling as though he had come into a fortune.

As Christian Forgeat sat on the hard wooden bench of the third class coach which carried him to Paris, he closed his eyes so that nothing should distract his mind from his reflections, and made plans for his future, now that he was free—free at last. The authorities had given him the address of a manufacturer who would employ him—a special mark of satisfactory work permitted only to the *pantes*. But he realized that manual labor was not his forte and that he could earn only a pittance in the trade. Then, too, he felt a certain repugnance at the prospect of acknowledging his long term at the Colony, for he had greater ambition than to be a mere mechanic. Encouraged and aided by

Simon Bénoît he had not only finished the prescribed primary school course, but in addition had read some useful books and learned how to think.

"As long as I have money and time I am going to look for a better position—in an office, if I can find it. I don't care to be a workman and I don't want to meet any of the boys from the Colony," he thought. "Yes, I am willing to try—Monsieur Bénoît gave me that advice hundreds of times."

He bought some new clothes, decided to drop all the slang he had acquired at the Colony and to try to give the impression of being a young provincial seeking work in Paris.

"Ah, if only I can succeed in destroying all recollection of my miserable youth and in finding some small position, how happy I shall be!" was his constant thought.

He wished to raise himself little by little in the new surroundings where he was unknown, but instinct assured him he would meet with inhospitality. If only he might be a credit to the advice of his dear teacher whose watch beat so regularly next to his heart!

Alas! on what chance does the realization of one's

dreams and highest hopes depend? Christian's appearance was greatly against him, and he showed clearly his inexperience. To every application he received the same reply:

"Where do you come from? Where have you worked before? what can you do?"

To all these questions he gave the same hesitating answer. It was not long before the tailor, the hotel, and the employment office, where he had paid a fee for a position, had completely diminished his little fund. In going from place to place to the addresses which had been given him, the familiar scenes of his childhood's vagabondage aroused that instinct in him again. He continued to seek employment, but all to no avail. As he left a merchant who told him to call again in three months, he said to himself:

"Bah! I shall be happily placed by that time." He spent the rest of the day idling about, enjoying to the full the intimate joys of the child of Paris who has been away from his beloved city a long time and seeks out all his old haunts. A great deal of valuable time was lost in that way, and the temptation of the streets was given a chance to make its appeal.

At just the time when his resources were about exhausted and the future looked very discouraging, Christian found means of earning a few cents. It was not a very good position, but at least it insured him a night's lodging and sufficient food. He was accepted as a salesman in a temporary bazaar on the first floor of an unfinished building, but he lacked the assurance of a hawker, the trick of speech to enlist attention in crying out, "See the big sale, bargains,—All prices marked to 13, 17, 27, etc." The other two clerks, who had experience, took a dislike to him, ridiculed him, giving him the sobriquet of "Limpy" on account of his infirmity. After a fortnight he was dismissed.

His success in two or three other places was no greater, and his prospects looked very discouraging. Every morning the landlord of the house where he had a little attic room threatened to dispossess him, and then he started out afresh in search of work. In sheer desperation he presented himself with his papers to the manufacturer of brushes whose address had been given him when he left the Colony.

The man received him uncivilly.

"You should have come to me as soon as you were sent," he said. "Now we are having the dull season—and heaven knows what you have been doing in the three months you have been trotting the street—I've had enough of those ex-jailbirds anyhow."

In every place he received the same answer, "No work, no work." Christian gave his last francs for his room and lived on one frugal meal a day of bread and water.

Despite his misery, he was animated by a desire to carry out the last wishes of Simon Bénoît, and so refused to part with the old watch. For him it was a sort of fetich, a talisman. Every night, as he lay on his pallet of straw, he took the watch from under his pillow, looked at it lovingly, and listened childishly to its regular tick, tock. It seemed to him that something of his friend was still alive in the old metal case. No! the little flicker of conscience was not dead, his promise to remain honest still lived.

One winter evening, about seven o'clock, Christian Forgeat, who had reached the limit of his re-

sources, walked slowly along the railing which encircled the Place St. Jacques.

"Haven't I another sou in my pocket," he thought, "where am I to get the fifty centimes to pay my night's lodging? I must have a couple of sous to get something to eat."

His lunch had consisted of a little roll, and that was all he had had to eat during the day. What was he to do?"

Suddenly as he passed a lamp post, a man stopped him and cried, "Hello—le Boiteux!"

Christian was startled. "Le Boiteux" was his nickname at the Colony. He looked at the fellow, who had hailed him, recognized him immediately and said—

"Hello, Grosse Caisse."

The meeting annoyed Christian—up to this time he had succeeded in avoiding all his former associates and now he had come across one of the worst of them.

Mahurel (called "Grosse Caisse" because he had beaten the drum on the memorable occasion when the inspector visited the Colony) was one of a large family of criminals, and boasted of being the grand-

son of a man who had been hanged, which was a rare distinction in the penitentiary, constituting the test for aristocracy. There was not one of the inmates who did not wish he had an ancestor who had been guillotined.

Christian had not worked at the same trade as Mahurel, so knew him very slightly. He remembered "Grosse Caisse" however as a perfect brute.

Liberty had not served to improve the young ex-convict. After examining Christian from head to foot (and in spite of his poverty his appearance was still neat) he said:

"A whole suit and clean linen—you must have cash. Say, buy us a drink, will you?"

Christian's old habit of speech unconsciously came back to him and he answered in slang:

"Not me—haven't got a red."

Grosse Caisse sneered stupidly.

"Not a red? It didn't do you much good to be smart in school and be dismissed with a number one record—'taint possible—"

"It's true," answered Christian, impelled to admit the truth by the need for self pity, "not a red, and haven't had a thing since noon."

"Too bad," said Grosse Caisse in his hoarse voice, "I'm in the same fix, but I can help out an old pal—come with me to the Châtelet Théâtre. Of course your legs are out of business, but I stand in with the manager. He'll take you in the mob and we'll get twenty sous each—will you take me up?"

Twenty sous! Enough to pay his lodging and not die of hunger. Christian could not afford to be squeamish.

"That suits me, thanks, Mahurel," he said.

Five minutes later the two had joined a crowd of toughs and ruffians in an alley behind the theatre, where they were looked over by Monsieur Ernst, the manager.

"You bring me a limper," he said to Grosse Caisse angrily; "do you want to spoil the scene for the sake of giving your friends a job?—Still, I have some decent men to be the gentlemen, so he can be one of the people. You take care of him and poke his elbow when I count three, when all cry out, 'Death to Concini, death to Concini.' You'll be paid after the show is over. Go on, all of you now and get dressed."

Between two scenes of a fairy play the manage-

ment had arranged to present an old melodrama of historic setting whose action took place at about the time of the death of Maréchal Ancre. In the so-called dressing-room Christian put on a disgustingly filthy costume, and coached by Mahurel learned to cry, "Vive le Roi," at the proper cue, when Louis XIII entered.

Christian Forgeat felt as though he had fallen into his old surroundings, for he saw the same type of face and heard the same language which he had grown to know so well at the Colony.

At the third count Monsieur Ernst, who directed the chorus said:

"Attention to the entrance of the Queen Mother. All together now: 'Down with the Italian, death to Concini.' "

The actress who occasioned this outburst was a large handsome woman. Her speech delivered in a stage whisper was:

"Ah! Monsieur Maréchal, the people hate you."

Grosse Caisse murmured to Christian:

"That woman is Madame Armand—the one who used to be so beautiful. Say, look at her sparklers—nab those earrings and collar for me, will you—

they say they're worth over two hundred thousand "balles" (francs).

"And say, limper, if you want this job again tomorrow, be sure you don't spoil the 'Mort à Cincini.'"

Christian earned twenty sous, and the next day and for several days following he took his place in the mob for, although he thoroughly detested his new position, the small sum he received kept body and soul alive. By helping in this small way he contributed to the success of the political scheme which had for its object the expulsion of the Italian conspirators and the avenging of the death of the late king.

Several evenings later a large important looking man came into the theatre the mere mention of whose name caused a wave of fear and respect to spread through the ranks.

"What does that devil want of us?" said Grosse Caisse to Christian. "Is it our fault if Madame Armand has lost an earring?"

As each member of the chorus passed before Monsieur Ernst to receive his "salary," the big man eyed him like a hunting dog. Christian was thoroughly

frightened by this look, which reminded him of his stepfather and of Captain Caillou. It was evident that the search was futile for no one was detained.

The next morning as Christian left his boarding-house, he was surprised to find Mahurel waiting for him on the sidewalk.

"Listen to me, Boiteux," commenced the other, who seemed to be both worried and happy, "answer me on the square: have I ever deceived you? You wouldn't snitch on a pal, no matter what happened, would you? Would you go back on a fellow that had put you on to a job and a feed for the last eight days?"

"You bet I wouldn't—I'm not that kind," was the reply.

"Well then, look here," said Mahurel. "I'm the kid that found that earring last night—honest, I didn't hook it, I found it on the ground in the wings—no one saw me. It's all diamonds—the real goods. I wager it's worth at least 2,000 francs. Gee, I struck it rich this time—I'll divvy up with you."

During this startling revelation the better impulses of Christian Forgeat revolted. An instinct,

which would not be downed, impelled him to say to Mahurel:

"Take care; the earring isn't yours—you must give it back—you'll get a big reward, anyhow."

Grosse Caisse looked at his companion in amazement and derision.

"Give it back?" he said in a frightful rage, "give it back to get one louis from Madame Armand and 'thank you, my boy'—I didn't think you were such a fool. Say, look at me a minute; do I look like the honest driver that you see in pictures with his whip in his hand giving back the purse to the country jay who dropped it in his hack? Not much, you can bet—I didn't steal—whatever falls into the moat belongs to the soldier.

"See here; the other day when you hadn't a thing to eat, if you had found twenty francs on the pavement would you have turned them in? And maybe they might have belonged to a poor devil who needed them. But Madame Armand, she's nothing but an old *cocotte*, who has horses and carriages and a big house on the Bois. She's got bunches of jewelry, and when I have the luck to find one earring, I should give it back for a miserable little tip, and the

pleasure of having been honest? Nit! I'm not that kind of a rube, my friend. The prize Montyon is not my kind of beauty, and damn it all, it wouldn't be fair if the hungry fellow didn't have a stroke of luck once in a while."

This cynical language was nothing new to Christian Forgeat. It was the same as his first companion in vagabondage, Natole, had used when he had stolen a handful of prunes from the grocer's stand—the same as that with which nearly all the boys at the Colony had expressed themselves.

"Well, do as you please," was his answer to Mahurel, with a shrug of the shoulders; "I can't look out for your honesty, and I swear to you the secret is just between us. But why did you tell me about it?"

"Because I had a little decency. I invite *monsieur* to go halves with me—I am not a pig, I don't like to have a good time all by myself—and that is the way *monsieur* takes it."

But Christian did not trust Mahurel nor did he believe that there was no hidden motive in the confidence. Presently his suspicions were justified.

"Well, say, let's play the game fair. It's true

you can do a fellow a good turn; I have the earring, but how can I get the cash for it? At the pawn shop? Not a show—they are on—well there's only one other place, Soldmayer, who sells odds and ends in the Rue Cadet; he's always willing to buy anything at all if he can get it cheap—but he'll ask first if you stole it, the old skin. I've sold him a couple of things, just trifles, which I have 'found.' He'll offer me two hundred francs when it's worth fifteen times as much. He sees I don't know what they're worth, so I made up my mind to take you to him. Your togs look decent and I'll pass you off as a fellow whose girl sent him to sell her earring. The old skate will believe you, and he won't think you are an easy mark like me; he knows how much things are worth, and he'll give us at least 1,800 francs. I'll give you one-third. Gee, then I'll get me a whole suit at Godchaux and be as swell a guy as you; we'll have a good feed from soup to nuts, and finish up at the Val Favier and meet some girls there.

"But of course Mister Limpy has his scruples," he continued sarcastically and with an attempt at fine language, "and rather than break them he

would say ‘Zut’ to a friend who put him wise to a good job. Say, look here, will you do what I ask? I’m afraid you won’t. Well, if you don’t, you’ll be as big a scoundrel as all the other beastly rubes and honest men.”

During this entire explanation of Mahurel’s a desperate fight was going on in Christian’s conscience. He fully understood his part in the scheme—he was to be the accomplice of a thief, to sell the product to a receiver of stolen goods! At the Colony, among the children of the “Army of Vice,” one point of honor was rigorously adhered to, “Never go back on a pal.” No matter how depraved he was every boy observed this rule to the letter. Christian had retained that scruple of the penitentiary. He felt he could not say “No” to Grosse Caisse, who had voluntarily helped him, even though the favor which he demanded was dangerous and compromising.

“All right,” he said briskly, “I’ll do it—lead the way.”

“Hurrah!” said Mahurel joyously. “Here comes the omnibus; I have ten sous left—I can afford to pay.”

A half hour later the two reached the Montmatre district in its early morning bustle, and Mahurel pointed out a little shop at the corner of the Rue Cadet.

"Here we are," he said.

The place was a sort of classical den in picturesque disorder and with the usual mysterious attraction. Among the ordinary cast-off clothes hanging from every corner of the door were some full-dress suits. In one corner there was a uniform ornamented with green palms which constituted the only evidence of immortality left by a deceased academician, and suspended in another was a trumpet à la Dampierre, which had often sounded the start of the hunt and the loud fanfare of the full cry, which had warned the gay riders of the approaching storm. In the glass showcase were some pieces of old lace, some bowls filled with buttons of all kinds, miniatures, sold for just the worth of their frames, a silver flute, two or three crosses of honor with faded ribbons—all of them telling their own sad stories. This heterogeneous collection was fascinating and depressing in its variety. Under another glass cover some very beautiful pieces of jewelry

were displayed, and on the ticket attached to each one was written the word "Occasion" (bargain), and the prices were comparatively reasonable.

"Let's go in," said Mahurel to his companion pushing him ahead.

Christian saw a small bald-headed man behind the counter. It was Soldmayer who was polishing a heavy gold bracelet.

As he looked up and saw the two visitors in the half light he quickly hid the bracelet in a drawer and stepped from behind the counter to wait on them.

He had neither the appearance nor the bearing of a merchant. He was short, fat and very pale, with heavy black whiskers and a head as smooth as a billiard ball. His age was about forty. He wore a well tailored suit and clean linen. A heavy gold watch chain and a big diamond stud were very evident.

He would not have changed places with a member of the Bourse.

"Ah! there you are, Grosse Caisse," he said in a

thick voice after suspiciously examining the two pals, "but I don't know the other fellow. Who is he?"

Then Grosse Caisse told his story very glibly.

"A young man whom a fashionable young woman is in love with," he said, "a cocotte, is willing to sacrifice everything because she loves 'le Boiteux'—she loves him just for himself no doubt! And the Marquise disposes of her jewels one after the other —this time it is an earring which she did not care to send to the pawnbroker to whom she sent the other for fear she would lose them both."

Soldmayer interrupted with a laugh.

"All that stuff is lies," he said; "the woman would have come herself. But it makes no difference; show me the earring anyhow and I'll make you a price. But you know my rules: once the business is finished, I've never seen you, never known either one of you, do you understand?"

Christian, to whom Mahurel had entrusted the ornament, took it out of his pocket and handed it to Soldmayer. A blush of shame overspread his face. His willingness to be an accomplice in this business made him seem a culprit in his own eyes.

Soldmayer went over to the light to examine the

stones. For two long minutes he watched the play of color then said:

"Three hundred is all I'll give."

"You old hypocrite," said Mahurel, "you're joking, aren't you? You can't offer such a price to the *Boiteux*; he's up to snuff; he knows what they're worth—isn't that so, *Boiteux*? Three hundred—not on your life. No more need to talk about it. We'll go to 'my aunt' with it."

"At the Mont de Piété," said Soldmayer coolly, "you must show your papers and give your address, you will not go there—but I'm not a piker, I'll give you twenty napoléons."

Then there was animated dispute between the thief and the receiver. Mahurel asked one thousand francs and his opponent laughed at him for his pains.

"I'll take eight hundred but not a sou less." Still Soldmayer was immovable. As he looked at the earring, whose stones scintillated in his hand, he repeated over and over again:

"Four hundred francs, four hundred francs, and not one sou more."

Christian, despite his friend's vicious glances, kept

silent. How could he ever have agreed to come? he wondered. Remorse and disgust were in his heart against which he felt the regular ticking of Simon Bénoît's watch.

"Well, I'll give five hundred francs," said Soldmayer in a rage.

Mahurel, at the end of his rope, gave in.

Soldmayer went to the darkest corner of the shop, pushed aside some rags, which were carelessly thrown over a strong box, and opened it carefully. Christian observed a revolver lying next to the box, placed there no doubt for use in case of a sudden attack while the box was open. The sight of the weapon filled him with an indescribable fear and he realized that he would never forget the iron box in the dark corner, nor the pistol, nor the memorandum book which reported so many robberies.

Suddenly the box was closed and soon Christian found himself in the street, scarcely conscious of having left the shop. Grosse Caisse was with him and showed him the five hundred franc bank notes in his hand.

"I promised you one-third of the 'benef' but I can

give you only one hundred 'balles,' and then that's a lot," he said. "You didn't do very much—the earring was worth six times what the old skate gave me, and if you'd only opened your mouth——"

Christian pushed away the hand which held out the bank notes toward him. Toc—toc—toc—toc—how it beat against his heart, the reminder of his honest friend. There was not a minute's hesitation about his refusal.

"Keep it all for yourself, Mahurel, I don't want any of it, and good-bye."

Mahurel was dumbfounded as he watched Christian hurry across the street in spite of his lameness and disappear in the crowd. This was quite beyond his code of ethics.

• • • • •

For four years Christian Forgeat, the ex-convict, lived an honest life finding his daily bread as best he could as do the sparrows in winter.

It did not take long for him to see that he would have to give up his ambition of finding a clerical position, for he did not write a good hand. This qualification was absolutely necessary to obtain the

most humble place and even Napoleon, whose penmanship was almost illegible, would not have been able to fill a clerkship.

Everywhere the poor fellow received the same reply: "Impossible to do anything for you; we need a good writer."

Christian Forgeat, whose health was not good and whose energy had been weakened by his infirmity, could offer only his time, but that was not very valuable. How happy he was when he found a place to hire himself—to sell the hours of his life as it were! He was entrusted with only such commissions as any child could execute. In the hot summer months or the cold Januarys he stood patiently at the street corners distributing handbills or walked up and down the streets, trying to peddle cheap toys.

Not the slightest chance! Two or three times he did find a permanent place. For a long time he was the "racoleur" (puller-in) at the door of a second hand men's clothing store; then he carried papers for a lawyer, but the old-clothes dealer failed and the lawyer was arrested for being a suspicious character. So Christian fell back into the lowest depths, sleeping wherever he could find a place in dark corners,

eating in disgusting coffee houses, and not even being able to afford that luxury every day.

In that low condition whom could he meet, whom would he be able to know? Many miserable beings, some scoundrels, sometimes an old associate from the Colony who had become a thief. Christian never shunned them now, but answered their "Tiens, le Boiteux," by a handshake and a friendly word. He would accept shamelessly a glass of wine or a stein of beer from any of the ruffians, and as he listened to the man boasting of his latest stroke of luck he would smile encouragingly although he was inwardly disgusted.

Circumstances destroyed the last vestige of scruple he had; his life had been too severe, the world too hard, society too unsympathetic. His mind inclined toward the worst temptations. He was going straight toward crime and vice, and often wondered how he had succeeded in resisting their appeal so long.

Whenever a piece of good luck came his way, which was very seldom, and he felt a little silver jingling in his pocket he went on a jollification.

This man of twenty-five whose face was refined

and gentle, whose physique was good, despite his lameness, had always taken as good care as possible of his personal appearance, because of an innate delicacy. His conception of love was only that which he had learned in the streets. Simon Bénoît's watch did not tick now against the heart, which was becoming more embittered day by day. The constant reminder of his dear friend had been pawned long ago, but Christian had always managed to redeem it. Superstition now prompted him to carry the pawn ticket with him all the time, and even in the worst moments of his miserable existence, when a hatred against Fate would surge to his brain, he seemed to feel in the paper the tic-toc of the watch which had beat against his chest and signified reproach and warning.

CHAPTER XIV

THE MURDER

ON that stifling night in August when Christian Forgeat stood with his face buried in his hands, unseeingly watching the current of the Seine, he had reached his limit of endurance and was absolutely despondent.

Since eight days he had been making every possible effort to find work, but although he was willing to do anything at all to earn the few sous he needed, he found nothing. It was the middle of the summer and the dull season. The young man hadn't eaten a morsel since four o'clock in the morning, when he had spent his last sou for a stale roll. As he wandered through the network of little streets around Saint-Séverin, weak from starvation, he saw a little boy throw a crust of bread into the gutter. He picked it up and devoured it ravenously, like a famished wolf. This bite satisfied the intense gnawing of hunger sufficiently for him to drag himself to the

quay, where he had remained since two o'clock, overcome by the weight of his trouble and completely exhausted by fatigue.

His thoughts were of self-destruction.

"Shall I jump over the wall, plunge into the stream and end it all?"

"No," he answered his own doubts; "how can I think of such a thing?"

He fell into a sort of torpor, his eyes unconsciously and fixedly staring at the current of the stream, which eddied and whirled at his feet.

The first stroke of seven pealing from a clock on the Palais aroused him from the stupor. He started as though he had been suddenly awakened from a sound sleep. The horror of his condition gripped him.

"Ah! I'll have to stir myself; I can't go on without a sou."

Suddenly he remembered the pawn ticket from the "Mont de Piété" which he constantly carried about him. Yes, that one last resource was left. The old watch was worth over one hundred francs as old gold, and he had pawned it for forty. He would sell the pawn check. That would be twenty-

five or thirty francs perhaps—not less than thirty anyhow—which meant a bed and enough to eat for a number of days and one good time—for he was seized by a sudden contradiction of temperament, one of those insistent demands for enjoyment which asserts itself in the most depressed beings. He let his mind dwell on the pleasure of a good dinner with a litre of wine and a *pousse café* at the restaurant Gamache. Later he would sit on the terrace of a brasserie, smoking leisurely and ogling the passing girls who accepted the least sign as an invitation to have a drink.

Why should he keep that old watch any longer—it had never brought him any luck, thought Christian. As a talisman it had not done him any more good than the moral teachings of the man who had left it to him. What had become of his pupil after four years' effort to be an honest man? To pick up crusts in the gutter? Zut! for all cherished memories!

“Who buys pawn tickets?” he wondered. Suddenly he remembered Soldmayer on the Rue Cadet, to whom he had gone with the earring Grosse Caisse had found. Oh, the old cheat! But all the second

hand dealers were alike—and anyhow if he would not give thirty francs he would go elsewhere.

"I'll have to hurry so that I get there before the shop is closed," he said to himself.

The hungry man was strengthened by the hope of a good dinner and hurried along. He reached "les Halles," then followed the "Rue Montmartre."

It was twilight. The glimpse of the sky to be caught between the tall buildings was leaden colored. The streets had not been lighted as yet, and the crowds seemed bent on hurrying home after their day's work.

"Close-fisted devil!" thought Christian of Soldmayer, "I wouldn't trust him for two sous. I can still see him opening the secret box behind the old clothes with that loaded revolver within easy reach. It wouldn't be safe to rob him; but all I care about is to get my thirty francs, for I must go on a jamborie to-night."

He stopped a second when he came to the shop. The show window was not lit up and one gas jet burned inside. He entered resolutely.

As on the previous occasion he saw the dealer seated at his desk writing.

"What do you want?" said Soldmayer, looking him full in the face.

Christian took the small memorandum book from his pocket, opened it and handed the ticket to Soldmayer.

"How much for this?" he asked.

The man had not changed in four years—he still wore pretentious clothes and flashy jewelry. There wasn't a white hair in his heavy black whiskers.

He put on his glasses, read the paper, looked closely at Christian. Suddenly his face lit up cunningly as though he had placed the man.

"Say, you," he said, "I know you, you came to see me once with Grosse Caisse."

Christian trembled—the dealer remembered him, knew that he had been the accomplice of a thief. "He'll cheat me now for that, but I won't take a sou less than thirty francs."

"Poor Grosse Caisse," said Soldmayer, "has he written you the news? Why did he ever get mixed up with that crowd that loot the houses on the 'Bois-Colombes'?—and now he's doing five years for it. Is it possible you did not hear of your friend's

luck?" he continued in answer to Christian's look of surprise.

Christian, who did not know that Grosse Caisse had gone to prison, began to grow impatient.

"Tell me if you want that ticket," he said. "I am not a thief, and I haven't seen Mahurel since the day we were here together. Anyhow, that has nothing to do with this business. What will you give for it?"

"I don't care to have anything to do with the pawnshop—they are sometimes overstocked. A gold watch, pledged for forty francs? I can imagine what kind it is, an old 'oignon.' I am afraid to take the risk—well, for the sake of Grosse Caisse——"

"Do you want fifteen francs?" he said looking hard at Christian.

"I guess not," said Christian, "the watch is old, but the case alone is worth one hundred francs. Be reasonable and give me thirty; you'll make a good profit at that."

"That's a fine deal for a father who has a family to support," said the dealer with an insolent laugh. "These street ruffians are amusing. Don't you sup-

pose I saw through your game last time about the earring? For trying to make me swallow that yarn I ought to hand you over and let you keep your friend Mahurel company. No doubt that watch belonged to your grandmother, hein? Thirty francs! these lambs are great. They get one into a dangerous risky deal and then put on airs and ask for a consolidated fund like a Rothschild. Thirty francs! I refuse to give that to a poor widow with a lot of orphans, and I have a soft heart, too; I said fifteen francs—do you want fifteen francs? No? Good-night, there is the door, then."

Christian was shaking with rage. Passion and a sudden uncontrollable hatred inflamed him against this heartless man who wanted to brand him as a thief, who humiliated him and heaped insult after insult upon him in his cutting sarcastic way. He hid his trembling hand in his pocket. What a satisfaction it would be to slap that greasy face.

"But what's the use?" he thought. "It will be the same thing anywhere else. One's as big a cheat as the other. Are there any honest men?"

"All right," he hissed through his clenched teeth, "I'll take fifteen."

Soldmayer shrugged his shoulders and sneered. He felt in his pocket, and not finding enough money went toward the back of his shop.

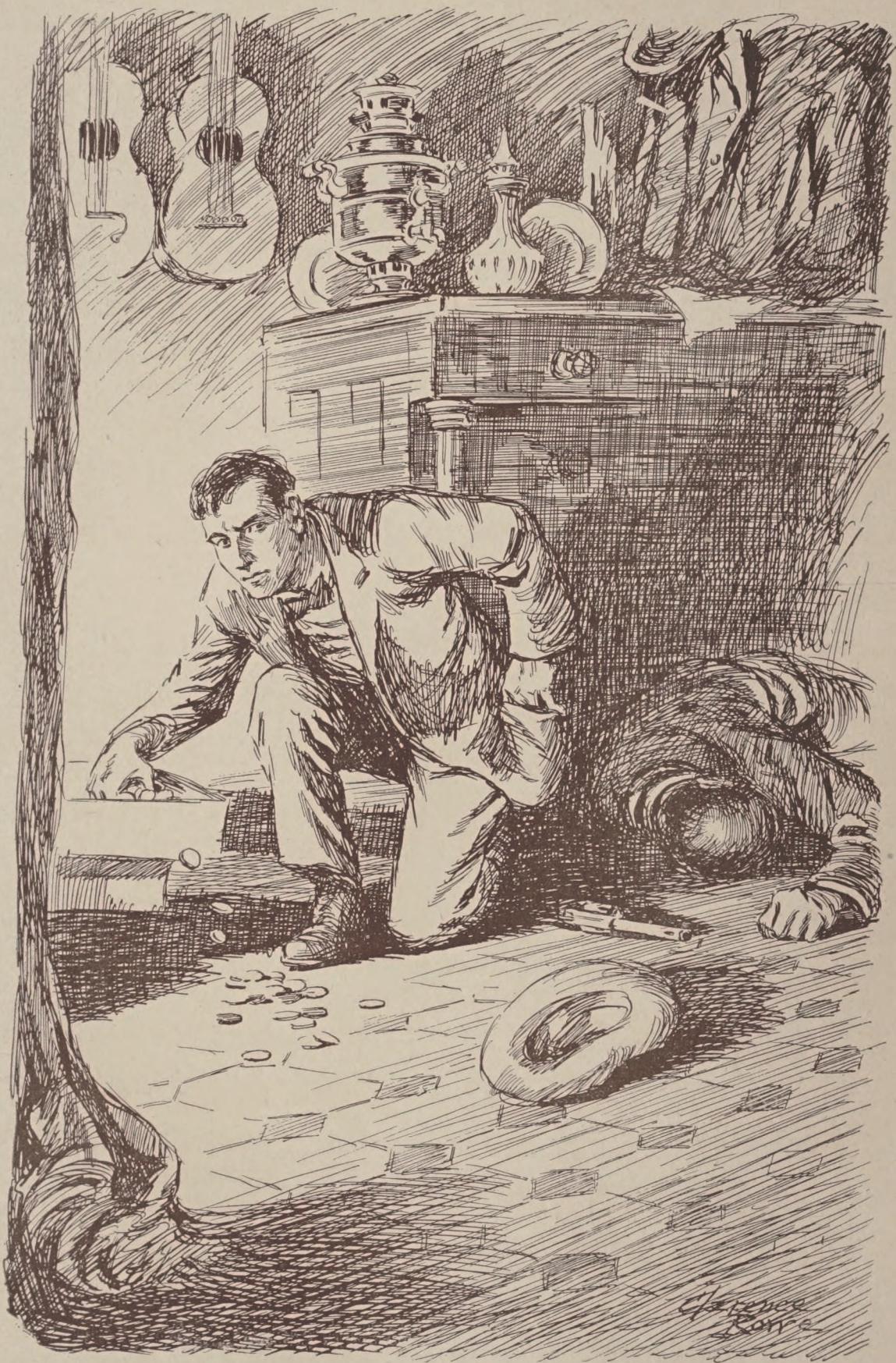
And then—like a lightning flash—Christian recalled vividly the strong box hidden among the old clothes, the loaded revolver and the portfolio full of bank notes. In the same second a crime outlined itself in his excited brain. Oh, how reckless and impossible that would be under the full blaze of the gaslight, two steps from the open door where a crowd of people were passing. No matter. This abnormal impulse gripped him, dulled his other sensibilities like a brain congestion, chilled his flesh and made his heart stop beating.

Soldmayer pushing the hanging clothes aside with one hand had just opened the box with the other—

With a single leap, the bound of a ferocious beast, Christian was upon him, and before the dealer could cry out, had grabbed the revolver and discharged it three times.

The injured man rolled into a corner, a stream of blood flowing from his bloated right eye.

Then the murderer, feeling that every hair of his



Charles
Rose

THE UNFORTUNATE CHILD AND MAN HAD SUFFERED SO INTENSELY THAT HIS CRIME
SEEMED A DELIVERANCE.

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head was on fire, quickly turned away with the certainty that someone had heard the shots and would come in from the street. But the heavy omnibuses had drowned the sound. Crazed by fright Christian threw down the weapon and seized the portfolio, emptied in two handfuls a wooden bowl full of gold, threw the money into his pocket and rushed out of the store. Two minutes later he was in the boulevard Montmartre safely lost in the crowd.

Four years this poor fellow had struggled, four years he had tried every day and unceasingly to remain absolutely honest, and in response to one terrible irresistible impulse he had become a murderer and a thief. As he passed a sumptuous café brilliantly lighted he looked at his hands—not a drop of blood, not one evidence of crime.

The unfortunate child and man had suffered so cruelly that his crime seemed a deliverance. Realizing that he had money and was safe, he heaved a deep and horrible sigh of relief.

CHAPTER XV

THE FATHER'S AWAKENING

THE day after Soldmayer was murdered M. Christian Lescuyer, Attorney General to the Court of Paris, spent the afternoon writing in his large office, two of whose high windows opened on the Place Royale.

He had scarcely reached the half century mark, but he had the appearance of a very old man, and more than ever showed a striking resemblance to his deceased father. Literally surrounded by old musty books, he bent over a table littered with legal papers and wrote attentively. His bushy gray eyebrows, the unmistakable Lescuyer stamp, were contracted and his forehead was wrinkled.

Monsieur Lescuyer had had a very successful career, but nevertheless he was a most unhappy man.

His wife had died in the first years of their marriage and for twenty years he had watched his only child, a weak daughter, suffer the lingering death of

consumption. Just about a year had gone by since he lost her.

Work only, unceasing devotion to his calling, had filled his dull existence. He had devoted his best efforts to an exhaustive work on penal law and after the publication of the first five volumes was acknowledged an authority among jurisconsults. He had been a member of the bar in Paris for the last few years and had earned a splendid reputation for his profound knowledge and simple eloquence. The esteem of his superiors and colleagues would have made it possible for him to reach the highest position of the judicial magistracy, but he allowed others to out-distance him because he had no one with whom to share his success. This austere man whose habits and character were irreproachable cared for nothing and wished for no other diversion than his work. He looked with disdain and weariness upon every other interest as unworthy of effort and desire.

Since his daughter's death Monsieur Lescuyer had plunged himself the more deeply into his work and solitude, and although the judicial vacation had commenced he remained in Paris during the excessive

heat and storms of August, writing night and day or consulting authorities for material to be used in the sixth volume of his great work.

This man had begun life with a great sin on his conscience which he had never forgotten. If he were not a prey to absolute remorse the frequent sad recollection of his action often tortured him. He could not silence the small still inner voice by repeating that he had suffered much and fully expiated his cruel treatment of Perrinette and their child.

Whenever he was particularly repentant he searched the old laws with a vague hope of obtaining some self-justification in its pages; but he could find none,—proof conclusive that a court of justice is a necessity and that society gives it the power to punish not only as a legal privilege but as an imperative duty.

Despite Lescuyer's devotion to his work the exhausting heat and humidity of the atmosphere unfitted him to continue.

"Enough for to-day," he said, pushing aside the in-quarto volume of the Customs of the Cotentin,* from which he had been copying a sentence. "I am

*Formerly a part of lower Normandy.

suffocating. I must go out and get a breath of air."

He went to the window and looked out at the dull scene: the clouded sky and the Place Royale, where he saw a tower of decaying greatness with its faded yellow façade and a massive statue of Louis XIII.

"I'm going out," he said aloud, "I am so lonesome —what a life!"

He went into the street and walked along slowly without any fixed purpose.

The statute, familiar though it was, suddenly suggested to him Donadieu, his old school-fellow, the only intimate friend he had ever known.

"I haven't seen him in several months," he mused.
"What a misanthrope I have become."

Although the sculptor had become quite famous and had won the medal of honor, the rosette and the green suit, "*toute la sacrée boutique*" as he gaily expressed it, he was not rich. However, he had a constant supply of commissions and lived in comparative comfort. Devoted to the left bank of the river he had taken a house on the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, that had a large studio and a garden the size of a handkerchief.

"Nothing thrives there but sunflowers, as in the

switchman's garden in the middle of the Gare St. Lazare," said Donadieu, who had lost none of his spontaneous fun although his hair had turned white. "When I sit out there in the evening smoking my pipe, it is a shock to think that these flowers will spread so rapidly that they will stop up the harbor."

Héloïse would laugh at his pleasantries as she had done in the old days. She was now an immense woman, jollier if possible than ever. She had her diamond earrings and a diamond brooch, which she wore once a year when she dined at the home of the Secretary of the Institute. Despite her husband's success she remained simple and good-hearted, never hesitating to talk with his models, always giving them the well-meant motherly advice to follow her example of remaining true to their lovers.

Christian Lescuyer had to go through the Luxembourg Gardens and the Latin Quarter to reach Donadieu's house. He usually avoided these sections which reminded him so forcibly of his youth, but to-day in his haste to see his friends he took the shortest route.

As he crossed the Avenue de l'Observatoire he noticed a stout woman pushing a baby carriage coming toward him. Her almost careless and unfashionable attire gave him the impression that she did not live in that aristocratic neighborhood. As she came nearer he recognized that it was Héloise, Madame Donadieu.

"Ah! it is you, my dear friend," she said pleasantly as she shook hands with Christian Lescuyer. "Come home with me now, 'le père Dieu' is so disappointed because you have not been over in a long time."

"Is he well?" asked Lescuyer.

"Yes, and you will see him directly," she answered; "he is taking a walk on the other side of the river and said he would meet me here. You'll dine with us, of course. I have a fine melon for to-night."

Lescuyer accepted the invitation, at the same time looking at the large baby who slept soundly in its wicker carriage.

"Oh! I forgot," said Héloise, "you haven't met 'l'Ogre' yet."

"L'Ogre?" repeated the lawyer in a surprised tone.

"Yes, that's our name for him on account of his enormous appetite. He is a foundling, whom we adopted six months ago. You know how badly the 'père Dieu' and I felt because we have no children. That was why we were so fond of pets. Do you remember our poor Bonnet à poils? After he died we had all kinds of birds and dogs that we loved like children, and we still have some, of course. Three years ago in our little place at Montfort l'Amaury, my husband bought me a donkey and a cart, but I got so stout from lack of exercise that I made him sell it. I said to him:

"Petit Dieu, I know you; in a fortnight that donkey will be in the house and you'll have him sleeping with you." Then he said as he always does,

"I love animals—but they aren't children."

"Ma foi," I answered, "why don't we adopt one?"

"So one fine day we went to the 'Enfants Trouvés,' where there were so many lovely little ones that it was hard to choose. François signed a lot of papers and we took l'Ogre."

She told the story very simply and her kindly eyes lit up as she looked from Lescuyer to the sleeping child.

"What good people you are, Donadieu and you," said Lescuyer, as a cruel reminder of Perrinette and his own child gnawed at his heart.

"What did they tell you about the child?" he asked.

Héloïse answered:

"Sex—masculine.

"Age—twenty-one months.

"Weaned.

"That's all—they hand over the child and the particulars as though he were a pound of butter bought at a grocer's. But really it was an excellent idea of mine—'le père Dieu' adores him—poor little fellow. Is it possible that he could have had such unnatural parents?——"

But Héloïse stopped short in the midst of her reflection and added in a low tone:

"I take that back, one must not criticize other people; perhaps misery drove them to it."

Christian Lescuyer, thinking of his own past, felt

a blush of shame suffuse his cheeks. He was aroused by hearing Héloïse exclaim:

“Look, here comes ‘le père Dieu’.”

Donadieu’s hair and moustache were prematurely white, but his face was still youthful and sanguine. He was alert and robust and walked briskly toward them. On the lapel of his loose blue jacket was the red rosette of honor.

“Hello there, you neglectful friend,” he said shaking Lescuyer’s hand enthusiastically. “Of course you’ll have dinner with us—and I’m glad you came to-day for we leave for the country to-morrow to spend the fall there. I am glad to see you, *mon petit Christian.*”

Le “petit Christian” was a distinguished legal light, an old man in deep mourning whose sad facial expression gave evidence of his life. But Donadieu always called him “petit Christian,” since he had formed the habit in their school-day intimacy.

“Has Héloïse introduced l’Ogre to you?” asked the artist as he looked tenderly at the sleeping child.

“Yes, I know all about him; it is just like both of you to adopt a homeless child.”

“Bah,” said Donadieu, disclaiming credit for his

goodness, “we have our reward. The four-footed animals weren’t enough for us; we wanted a biped that could talk, and we found one. That little imp can run about, and to make him say ‘papa’ or ‘pipi’ you don’t have to touch a spring inside of him, like those in the automatons.

“But—I’m hungry—let’s go home and stir up the cook a bit, la mère,” he said turning to Héloïse. “It’ll soon be seven o’clock and you must go down into the cellar to get a bottle of our best wine for Christian. You go on ahead; I’ll wheel the young gentleman.”

“And I’ll buy a cake,” said Héloïse as she went down the Rue Michelet.

They followed her very slowly. As Donadieu pushed the carriage he suddenly remembered his friend’s recent mourning, and felt a natural delicacy.

“My poor Christian,” he said, “I’m so stupid: with my delight at playing father, I forgot your sorrow—forgive me.”

“Certainly,” said Lescuyer, hiding his emotion.

When they reached Donadieu’s house supper was ready, but before they sat down the little “Ogre” had to have his evening meal and be put to bed.

They sat at the table while the nurse fed him, his foster parents watching with delight. He was really a lovely child, full of life and energy.

"The childhood of Gargantua," said Lescuyer smilingly.

"And you will see when he is undressed," said the sculptor; "he has a fine chest—I've made a little statue of him."

Then when the child had been put to sleep the three friends sat down to their meal. Héloïse, who as an old grisette took a keen interest in the doings of the Quartier and Montmartre and read only the articles concerning those districts, turned to Lescuyer and said:

"Monsieur le Juge, what did you think of the latest crime in the Rue Cadet?"

The attorney general had not heard a word of it. Héloïse was astonished.

"What," she said incredulously, "you are surely interested in murders. A frightful crime has been committed. A dealer in second hand clothing was killed in his shop at seven o'clock last night. His place is in the heart of Paris and the street was full of people. He was murdered with a pistol, too, and

no one heard the shot. The assassin walked away quietly with the stolen money. It is enough to make one's hair stand on end—that's all one heard this morning in the shops. Haven't you seen the 'Petit Journal'?"

"Héloïse is right," said Donadieu jestingly to Christian. "What does interest you, if you do not read the latest sensational murder—the work of the men through whom you make your living?"

Then Héloïse told with all its graphic details what she had read of the crime. Of course the dealer was not a very interesting victim, being merely a receiver of stolen goods who lost his life no doubt in driving one of his hard bargains. That which amazed the public, however, was the boldness and recklessness of the criminal.

"Bah!" said Lescuyer, "I suppose he will not go very far before he is arrested, if the conditions are as you say. I know the type of man he is, no doubt a *cheval de retour* whose movements are watched by the police. He will spend his money openly and thus cause his own arrest. I haven't a doubt that he's in a cell at this very minute."

"So much the better," said Héloïse, "then he'll be

hanged. With such scoundrels at large one is afraid to sleep."

Donadieu, who did not believe in capital punishment, now volunteered his opinion.

"Don't say such things, dear," he said to Héloïse; "I approve of exiling such criminals to any part of the world, but as for the guillotine—ah, my dear girl, it's easily known that you have never seen that instrument of torture."

In graphic terms the artist explained how he and some friends once went to the "Place de la Rotonde" one morning to see an execution.

It was in the summer time and the sky was cloudless. The dawn was breaking, but the morning star had not yet disappeared. The onlookers constituted a motley dissolute crowd, whose songs, screams and whistling were horrible. The scene was altogether revolting. The scaffold was set, a sort of "game from Siam" with a large opening in which the criminal's head was placed. And the hangman? A coarse degenerate type of the lowest order. When the command, "Portez armes," was given and the convict appeared—oh God! it was terrible—never to be forgotten. The whole world, the judiciary,

the army, the crowd of onlookers, every one banded against that one unfortunate man. The entire human family against one atom! Why? It was too frightful, too dastardly!

"The crime had to be punished," said Christian Lescuyer in his cold hard voice. "There is a duty to society that must be observed."

But the sculptor, whose tenderness outweighed his sense of justice, would not be convinced. He protested and argued so earnestly that his pipe went out three times. Capital punishment is a relic of barbarism, was his unshaken contention. The laws although they were deficient and inconsistent at best, reached their height of pitilessness in this connection.

"A man is judged for one act which was probably prompted by the impulse of a moment, not by his whole life's work," asserted Donadieu, "and there are so many other crimes of everyday occurrence of which the Code takes no account."

"See here," he added vehemently, "that thought absolutely tortured me when Héloïse and I went to the foundling asylum to adopt a child. These 'enfants de l'amour' whom one sees there are for the most part far from beautiful with their hideous skin

diseases and scars. Many of them have water on the brain, poor little victims of a mighty law. We didn't find our darling little 'Ogre' directly, I assure you. And then, even if they are not defective, what a miserable heritage is theirs! And what a future! What is their fate after they leave the Infants' Home? Misery.—If I were to hear that the murderer of last night is one of these unfortunate beings and I were to serve on the jury, how I should plead extenuating circumstances.

"And do you know to whom I attribute most blame in such a case?" he cried. "To the father, the scoundrel who abandoned the mother of their unborn child. It is invariably the same story.

"Now, Monsieur Magistrat, search your Code from beginning to end—what do you find about paternity of this sort? Not a word! Tell me, do you believe that this is justice—does that father deserve to go unpunished?"

Christian Lescuyer, ghastly, with his eyes lowered, one hand lying nervously on the tablecloth, the other mechanically twirling a small wine glass, listened to the denunciation by the warm-hearted Donadieu,—words which were absolutely crucifying to him.

Then the conversation was changed to a more lively topic and Lescuyer's unhappy recollections were forced into subconsciousness. Donadieu told of how he had spent the day. He had visited an old student friend who was making a fortune in the last few years as a portrait painter. The honest sculptor was incapable of envy; however, he could not help contrasting his long difficult career with the good luck of his friend, who had made so great a success despite mediocre ability.

"Now, you cannot imagine the luxury in which he lives," said Donadieu. "There is a lackey in gorgeous attire to open the door, who took my card on a silver salver. And the staircase! Entirely of carved oak—really magnificent. There is only one other like it—at Ambigu."

"I found my friend Verdal painting a black water spaniel with a silver collar—as a distinctive touch in the portrait of the handsome Madame L'Equateur, whose husband was the president of a corporation for five and a half hours, just long enough to abscond with the funds. In order to bribe the little beast to sit still, the servant who had brought him

there gave him a little piece of sugar every other minute.

"Verdal was very courteous to me because I am a member of the Institute where he hopes to win a place some day. Yes, he was very agreeable, but did not stop his work all the time I was there. Bah! he painted all morning with about as much inspiration as though he were knitting a stocking. He'll get ten thousand 'balles' for that—why, he's growing richer than a hog dealer! They say that he doesn't take time to use his handkerchief until after sunset, for every time he puts down his palette he loses twenty francs. His latest cold in the head cost him a cool three thousand!"

CHAPTER XVI

THE TORTURE OF UNCERTAINTY.

AT about eleven o'clock Christian Lescuyer left the Donadieu in a very good humor. François' description of his artist friend had amused him greatly. The atmosphere was clear; it was one of those nights in which every star in the firmament is shining—a balmy night when the brilliantly lighted cafés are filled with people and the shopkeepers sit outdoors enjoying the cool breeze after an exhausting day's work.

The magistrate walked slowly toward the Place Royale. He was so wrapt in thought of the pleasant evening he had spent that he did not pay any attention to the interesting phases of life about him. He was really in a happier frame of mind than he had known for a long time.

Lescuyer soon reached his hotel, and as he entered his room (where his valet had left a lamp burning on account of his habit of reading late into the night) he realized how pleasant his mood was.

"I am glad I went out," he said. "I must go to see the Donadieus very often in the future. I know I can work an hour or two with greater interest before I go to bed because I've had a little diversion." However, before setting to work he picked up a copy of *le Temps*, which his man had placed on the volume of the "Coutumes du Contentin." He looked over it curiously.

Suddenly this headline caught his eye:

"Le Crime de la rue Cadet. Arrestation de l'assassin."

"Oh yes," he thought with a smile, "that's the affair that aroused Héloïse to such a pitch. They have found the culprit—so much the better. There'll be great excitement at the markets to-morrow morning."

With much interest he began to read.

"The people of Paris," said the paper, "who have been so wrought up about the murder of Isaac Soldmayer, second-hand dealer of the Rue Cadet, will be glad to learn that his assailant was arrested to-day, less than twenty-four hours after the crime was committed.

"Our readers will recall that a pawn ticket of the

Mont de Piété, so blood soaked that the writing was almost illegible, was found near the victim's body. This was an invaluable clue for the police, who immediately began their search for the person whose name was on the check, and who—without a doubt—is the culprit.

"The man's name is Christian Forgeat."

Christian Lescuyer stopped reading and stared at the name.

"Christian Forgeat! Forgeat? that was Perrinette's name—and she wrote to me that she called her child Christian, Christian Forgeat! Ah! how well I know that name. How often I have repeated and written it, when I tried to find the boy and his mother. Christian is an odd name and that it should be connected with Forgeat is not a chance occurrence. There is no doubt about it, that is Perrinette's boy—and mine. Merciful God!—and this is how I find my son—a murderer and a thief. It is frightful!"

The man's tortured brain imaged the name that he had said over and over again, written in blood on a paper found near a murdered man, conclusive evidence that he had committed this frightful crime.

Unconsciously Lescuyer took up the paper and finished the account.

"We must admit the cleverness and promptness of the Police Department. Inspector Bosse recognized Christian Forgeat at once. He is a man of about twenty-five years of age, a released pupil of the Colonie Agricole du Plateau, where his daily companions were scoundrels like himself. Many of them are now serving long terms. Suspicions were strengthened by the fact that although his record is still clear, he holds no permanent position, has no dependable way of earning a living, and up to the present time his only work has been that of a peddler or a supe in a cheap theatre.

"On the supposition that Forgeat was the culprit, it is an easy matter to imagine the scene of the murder. Forgeat went to Soldmayer, no doubt, to sell him the pawn ticket, and killed him as the dealer opened his strong box. In his haste to get away after his audacious crime, committed in an open, lighted shop, the murderer forgot to take his pistol and the pawn ticket.

"Detectives went directly to the dingy boarding-house on the Boulevard Rochechouart where Chris-

tian Forgeat lives, but the lodger had not been there. Fortunately for Inspector Bosse he had an exact description of the fugitive whose most distinguishing characteristic is a noticeable lameness of the left foot. It is due to this that Detective Melon (whose success is well known) was able to recognize and arrest Forgeat at the Gare du Nord, where he was awaiting the train for Brussels.

"The murderer did not resist the authorities but confessed his crime. He denied premeditation, however, and asserted what seems most improbable, that he had entered Soldmayer's unarmed, and that at the sight of the revolver near the strong box, he had conceived the idea of murdering the second-hand dealer.

"Christian Forgeat has been incarcerated since two o'clock."

Christian Lescuyer not only imagined the crime in all its details, but from his knowledge of psychology realized its causes. In his long career as judge, he had often condemned such miserable wretches, but his own sin against Perrinette had not occurred to him in that connection. He had never realized before that the child whom he had abandoned

might have shared the same fate as these other pariahs.

In imagination he beheld seated before him all those whom he had condemned. He saw their round backs and lowered heads toward which he had pointed with judicial gesture, in charging the jury in whose hands lay their fate. He saw them shudder at his hard words as he demanded all the severity of the law against them. How many had he sent to prison and the penitentiary! And upon one poor wretch found guilty of murder and theft he had pronounced death!

All this he had done without a moment's hesitation, without a scruple. The fact that he was carrying out the law prevented any qualm of conscience. The lawyers for the defense always pleaded the same cause—no home influence, no moral training. In his reply he as attorney general, a pitiless orator, had warned the jury not to be guided by such misapplied sympathy, to confine themselves to the issue—Was the prisoner guilty, yes or no? He had urged them to punish him in the interest of society whose inalienable right it was to be defended and avenged.

"No," he cried aloud, "it is impossible—it is too, too horrible—I cannot be the father of this murderer!"

The old magistrate, whose life had been blameless but for that one stain, tried to recall all the reasons which he thought had justified the young student in abandoning Perrinette.

But mature experience and knowledge of life would not accept the excuses which youth had made, and the man was overwhelmed by a gnawing remorse, more poignant than ever, and was overcome by a shame and a loathing for himself.

On the verge of nervous collapse, Christian Les-cuyer paced up and down the room. Twenty times he had taken up and thrown down that frightful paper, twenty times he had read and reread the account of the arrest in which the name "Christian Forgeat" seemed to stand out in raised letters. In his distress and bewilderment, completely stupefied by the horror and lost in his thoughts and recollections, he did not realize it was after two o'clock. He sat down at his table and fell into a troubled sleep. An awful dream tortured his aching mind.

It was the Place de la Roquette on the morning of an execution. He was there in the motley crowd, in the first row behind the soldiers. Near him was the guillotine with its large round opening, and at a little distance he saw the prison door closed. Donadieu's description came back to him—"All against one." The silence was oppressive.

Very slowly the prison door opened. He could not see the face of the condemned man because the priest who walked with him covered the man's eyes to shut out the view of the gallows. But Christian Lescuyer imagined vividly the intense anguish on that hidden face and his heart began to palpitate. He had a presentiment that when he should see the man's face exposed to view the sight would be intolerable. He did not wish to look, but morbid curiosity forced him to open his eyes, to know the truth.

The head of the wretch was in the "trou" but the knife had not fallen. In one moment Christian Lescuyer realized that this young man resembled him, as a son bears the likeness of his father; that the face before him was like his own at the same age, and that the dark eyes, which gleamed under

their heavy black brows were fixed upon him with a look of recognition and intense hatred.

Christian Lescuyer was awakened by his own outcry. The name, Christian Forgeat, on the newspaper at his elbow was outlined in letters of fire.

The reality was unfortunately as frightful as the nightmare.

CHAPTER XVII

RECOGNITION.

THE attorney general started very early for the Court House, ostensibly to consult some authorities for his literary work, and when he entered the hall all the attendants were visibly impressed and deferential to the well-known Monsieur Lescuyer. As he passed the cells reserved for the worst criminals, he turned to the Superintendent and asked:

"What is the latest report about the man who murdered Soldmayer?"

"You mean Forgeat?" was the reply. "He is here, monsieur, in Number 4. To-morrow or the day after he will be sent to Mazas."

"And—what is his attitude?"

"He's completely crushed. I don't think he'll trouble the judge who tries his case. He's been there since yesterday under strict guard, but he hasn't said a word nor eaten a morsel. Would you care to see him, monsieur?" asked the Superintendent, motioning to the turnkey, who followed him.

The jailer hurried to open Number 4 but the attorney stopped him.

"It is not necessary," he said, "I shall look at him through the *trou du judas*."^{*}

This very small peep-hole widened into the shape of a funnel through the thickness of the wooden door, so that the curious visitors could see the interior of the cell without the occupant's suspecting that he was being watched.

Monsieur Lescuyer looked through the opening and at the first glance his doubts were cruelly settled. The prisoner bore a striking resemblance to him—the culprit was indeed *his son*.

Christian Forgeat was seated near a table at which two other men clad in jailer's attire were playing a game of cards. He sat staring vacantly into space, his back to the guards and his full face turned toward the eye which gazed fixedly at him through the aperture.

Christian Lescuyer felt all the physical effects of suppressed emotion: the intense heart palpitation and cold perspiration and a chill, which seemed to freeze the blood in his veins. He recognized un-

*Peep-hole or bars.

mistakably the distinguishing features of his family: the dark complexion and the deep set sunken eyes under their thick heavy brows. There was no possibility of a doubt: the prisoner was unquestionably a Lescuyer.

The attorney general was overpowered by an irresistible fascination to keep his eyes riveted on the prisoner. He seemed to see himself again at the same age, the age when he had loved Perrinette.

After a seemingly interminable minute he remembered who and where he was and that he must tear himself away from that overwhelming sight. It required a conscious effort for him to tell the Superintendent that he wished to go further, and he knew that his voice shook. Fortunately for him all the alleys of the jail were very dark and in consequence his pallor and his agitated manner would pass unnoticed.

Mechanically he went to his office in the Palais de Justice to gain control of himself.

"I must be calm and consider this dreadful calamity in all its aspects," was his only thought.

What chance had the criminal to escape capital punishment? Almost none. Murder, followed by

theft, pointed conclusively to premeditation. Because the crime had been committed in an open shop, in the heart of Paris, almost before the eyes of passers-by, it had caused a sensation which would gain intensity at the time of the trial. Public opinion would certainly be against the criminal. Jurors, who are often lenient in their verdict of a murder actuated by a sudden passion, are always merciless when the motive is theft.

Christian Forgeat (Christian Lescuyer trembled at the name), Christian Forgeat could not escape the gallows.

In vain the attorney general tried to reassure himself, to persuade himself, that the death penalty seldom was pronounced, and when it was, that the Chief of State, mercifully using his prerogative, often issued a commutation of sentence, so that blood was seldom spilled in the Place Roquette. But again and again Christian Lescuyer could arrive at only one conclusion. The evidence in the case of Christian Forgeat was incontestable: premeditated murder, followed by theft—death on the gallows could be the only result.

Then he thought of another criminal, one that

had been brought before him, who, though guilty as Forgeat, had escaped the death penalty. What circumstances had brought this about? The absolute repentance of the man, very sincere or else cleverly assumed, by which the sympathy of the spectators had been aroused; the testimony of a witness which caused still greater compassion—and a magnificent plea.

Monsieur Lescuyer, because of many a contest of eloquence and logic in his long career was acquainted with all the brilliant legal lights of Paris, and determined to select the very best for the defense of his son.

The crime of the Rue Cadet was an interesting one, whose defense could be ably pleaded by Monsieur Pechaud. The compelling manner and fiery eloquence of this orator, whose appeal to his listeners was wont to stir them to the depths, and whose sympathy was sincere, when the pathetic side of a case aroused his finer sensibilities, marked him as the man to save Christian Forgeat. He had been known to speak for three or four consecutive hours, and then to stop abruptly when, seeing tears in the jurors' eyes, he knew he had enlisted their sym-

pathy. Besides, he was a good friend of Christian Lescuyer.

"Yes, old Pechaud was the only man for this case. In his long and glorious career he had lost but two cases and he would succeed in this almost hopeless affair, in finding some extenuating circumstances.

"Yes—but what might these be? Was there anything that could be said to lessen the horror of this crime? It was impossible to imagine the slightest extenuation. Such a case was the delight of Tant-Pis, State Attorney, who after twenty years' experience, was well versed in the practices of the prosecution. But old Pechaud was a match for him.

"Yet, it is simple, in fact easily possible to plead for this boy," Christian Lescuyer thought with increasing relief. "He was an illegitimate child, abandoned from the day of his birth—alas, alas, by whom? A child's conscience perverted by the practices at the school of correction"

Then he thought of the innumerable times that he had disdainfully rejected a similar plea made by the defense, and a feeling of the inevitable irony of fate seized hold of him as with painful acuteness

he realized that his entire career had been based on a sin and carried out as a lie.

And again he saw in his mind's eye all the criminals (their shoulders bowed by fear and shame) whom he had crushed by his avenging eloquence as he had sent them to prison or to the scaffold. For all these miserable creatures he had had only words of anger and condemnation. And he had thought that he was fulfilling a superior function, performing a splendid useful duty!

And now it was his own son (yes, he was sure he was the father of Christian Forgeat)—his own son who sat on that same bench of infamy and on whose public execution he might be called upon to insist! This son had become a thief and a murderer, but after what kind of a life of suffering had he finally succumbed to temptation? And who had exposed him to such conditions? None other than the self-interested coward who had left a poor girl, and who, as one throws a new-born puppy into the sewer, had consigned his child to all the influences of misery.

Austere judge and implacable magistrate, put on your scarlet gown with its ermine border and your

cap ornamented with gold! Duty calls! Brandish the sword of the Law—discharge all the thunderbolts on that guilty head! To sacrifice your son, you have not the virtue of Brutus, but the angel of Justice guides your arm, you modern Abraham. The approval of the public and the social code demand that you be a hypocrite and a monster, that you condemn your own son to death! He owes his existence to you—but that does not change the order of things. It is your inevitable duty, your frightful function to destroy the existence you have created. Make the best possible use of your eloquence—thrill the bourgeois jury with your graphic description of the hideous crime. Condemn the prisoner with all show of judicial dignity—send him to the scaffold! It is only your own conscience which will know which one—you or he—is the guilty man!

After a day of reflection every minute of Christian Lescuyer's life was poisoned by these torturing accusing thoughts. They filled his waking and his sleeping hours with constant nightmare. One fact obsessed the man's mind—a realization of his own responsibility in the outcome of the life of Christian Forgeat.

The Judge ordered Christian Lescuyer, the attorney general, to prepare the case of the Rue Cadet for trial. It was thus that he learned the whole pitiful story of Christian Forgeat, of the death of Perrinette and the boy's commitment to the Colonie du Plateau, his release and four years of life in Paris. More and more, as he thought of the fate of his unfortunate son, was Christian Lescuyer convinced that *he* was the guilty man.

The sensation which this tragic case had occasioned was increased as the time for the trial approached. It was without doubt a "cause fameuse," and so it was not to be wondered at that Monsieur Lescuyer took so deep an interest in it.

The prisoner denied any preconceived plan of murder or theft—although the finding of the pawn ticket near the victim's body was incontestable evidence of it, persisting, despite all appearance to the contrary, that the sight of the pistol had actuated him.

The State tried in vain to use all its clever traps, to submit him to every chance to contradict himself; but he was unshaken in his own defence in asserting that he had no previous motive. He did not expect

to convince his hearers, being completely disengaged and resigned to what he felt was inevitable—his death sentence.

"I repeat what I have said," he replied to the Judge who asked him the same questions in different language. "I went there to sell my pawn ticket, and I had no idea of killing Soldmayer until he opened the strong-box. Then I saw the revolver next to the portfolio filled with bank notes. Oh! I know you do not believe me, and none of the spectators believe me and I shall probably be hanged. I want to die, I have had enough of life, and there's nothing in it—but I cannot say that I am worse than I am, and I have told you the whole story as it was, because that is the truth."

The Judge, M. Courtemer, who loved his profession and was a reasonable man, admired the persistency of the criminal and was inclined to believe in his sincerity.

One morning he met Christian Lescuyer in one of the halls of the Palais du Justice. He spoke at once of Christian Forgeat.

"Since that affair interests you so keenly, Monsieur l'avocat général," he said, "I must tell you that

I am at my wits' end—and the man is still firm in the same story. In two or three days I am going to conclude preliminary proceedings and send the indictment to the Supreme Court. I anticipate that he will still insist that he committed the murder on the impulse of the moment. It is hardly possible. If he has deceived me, he is very clever and feigns sincerity to an amazing degree—I admit that frankly.

"I am disposed to believe him; and there is another fact of evidence which I heard only yesterday that impresses me very favorably."

"And what was that, my dear colleague," asked Lescuyer, who listened eagerly to the old judge's every word.

"It is the evidence of an unfortunate woman with whom Forgeat spent an hour on the evening following his crime. She came of her own accord to testify in his favor. Of course, it relates only to the morality of Forgeat and has nothing to do with the matter in question, but it is a convincing proof that this criminal has a better side and that he still has a fragment of a heart. Come into my office, I want you to read that testimony; you will find it very interesting and strange, I am sure."

The two men went up the stairs and while Monsieur Courtemer was talking to his clerk, giving him instruction in a low voice, Monsieur Lescuyer was seated at a table covered with the papers of the Forgeat case, and intently reading the testimony of the latest witness.

"You are right, my friend," said the attorney general to the judge, "this young man has good instincts.—But I will leave you to your duties. Adieu."

After shaking hands with his colleague, Monsieur Lescuyer left him quickly in order that the emotion which stirred him so deeply should pass unnoticed. As soon as he entered the corridor he wrote a name and address in his memorandum book —Louise Rameau, 22 Rue des Vinaigriers. "I must see that woman at once and talk with her," he said.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE UNEXPECTED TESTIMONY AND ITS RESULT.

How long a single day seems to a man obsessed with one fixed idea! Night—at last the *valet de chambre* had brought in the large lamp and placed it on Monsieur Lescuyer's desk. He was in his apartment in the place Royale.

“Light the candelabra on the mantelpiece also,” ordered the attorney general, who nervously paced up and down the room.

Then he added:

“A woman, the one to whom I sent you this afternoon with a note, will be here at any minute. I shall see her.”

When the servant had left, Christian Lescuyer continued his nervous walk. On either side of the room were rows upon rows of his favorite old books, which had now lost their attraction for him. In the centre of the room stood his desk-table, littered with

manuscript to which he had not added a line. The heavy bronze ink-well had not been opened since two months, and why? Because since the arrest of Christian Forgeat eight weeks earlier, Monsieur Christian Lescuyer, tireless worker that he was, had been unable to concentrate his mind on any other subject. He could think of nothing but the criminal at Mazas, whose doom would soon be sealed and who was—*his son*.

“To save him”—that was his one all-absorbing thought. Yes, he must save him. In that way, Christian Lescuyer hoped to expiate, in a measure, his own sin of twenty-five years before which had blotted his whole life.

He wished to save the unfortunate on trial for his life. But how, by what means? He had succeeded in urging Péchaud to plead the defense, and he himself occupied the chair of the attorney general. If the State were kindly disposed, the punishment might be imprisonment at hard labor instead of death.

But at this thought the man stood still, realizing the utter hopelessness of the case.

“To prison—possibly for life—that will be a

magnificent restitution! I shall send my own son to jail!"

And again Lescuyer was overcome with the thought that his was the fault, his the cause.

"I, the attorney general, respected and highly esteemed, am to be blamed if the boy has become a criminal. I, the father, without an atom of feeling, who subjected him to the forces which have made of him what he is!

"If he is sent to prison, I shall probably send him some pin money to buy a few delicacies and some tobacco. What irony!

"If only I could obtain his acquittal, I would devote the remainder of my life to my son and reform him gently. Then and then only could I ever hope to atone for my sin against him. But why do I torture myself with vain expectations which I know are impossible——"

The valet de chambre knocked at the door.

"The woman whom monsieur is expecting is here."

"I shall see her here," said Lescuyer.

Two minutes later Louise Rameau entered the room. She was about twenty-two or twenty-three

years of age, and would have been very attractive were it not for her restless and sorrowful expression. Although it was late in the fall and the weather had grown very cool, she still wore her summer clothes, assuredly because she had no others. The dress was becoming to her, the hat had been pretty the previous spring. Then she had looked, no doubt, like a "chic grisette," but now her attire was old and faded, and only careful mending had kept it from falling to pieces.

The young woman very timidly crossed the threshold of the large room. She was thoroughly frightened as she faced the man in mourning who stood before the mantelpiece, and who in turn looked at her with dark sad eyes in which tears were plainly visible.

He pointed to a chair and asked her to be seated. Then he drew up one close to hers for himself and began to speak to her in a slow embarrassed manner.

"I asked you to come here and I thank you for coming—mademoiselle," he hesitated before that word.

"Thank you for responding so promptly to my appeal—I am the attorney general in this——" and

again he hesitated—"Christian Forgeat case. Do not be afraid—I asked you to come to see me because I wanted to *hear* the testimony which you voluntarily gave the judge. It seems to me that it will be to the advantage of—the unfortunate man. Have confidence in me and do not doubt my sympathy for you and for—the man whom you want to help.

"I am not the attorney general now, I am a *man*, whose one desire is to save Christian Forgeat not only from the gallows, but from a less severe punishment.

"Don't be ashamed, tell me frankly of your acquaintance with him on the last night of his liberty. Since you pity that man so sincerely, you may be able to help save him."

As she listened to Monsieur Lescuyer, the young woman lowered her eyes and blushed with shame. She wrung her hands, which were crossed on her knees. Her attitude was that of intense humiliation. Lescuyer watched her attentively and his face lost its habitual severe expression, his eyes becoming soft. When the girl remained quiet, he said gently:—

"Courage, my child—I know your life and how

you are to be pitied, if what you told Monsieur Courtemer is the truth."

That word of doubt was sufficient to decide the young woman and she began her story.

"I swear to you, monsieur," she said in a sweet trembling voice, "I swear that I told the absolute truth to the judge at the Palais de Justice, and I shall repeat to you what I told him.

"It is very humiliating to me—but what difference does that make to the poor creature that I am?

"My name is Louise Rameau—my trade is silk embroidery—embroidery on silk material. It is not a very well paid work, for the styles change so often. I must tell you that since my eighteenth year I have lived with a medical student who was an extern at Lariboisière where he took his M.D. He is the father of my little daughter, who is now almost three years old. She was out to board until last spring, when the nurse sent her to me because I could not pay for her any longer.

"On Albert's account I had left my own family, but we loved each other so dearly and lived—like husband and wife very comfortably.

"But later, when my poor Albert was graduated

as a physician, he had spent his entire inheritance and had a few debts, not many, but enough to worry him, and was forced to leave. Advised to begin his practice in Picardie, where there was only one other doctor, an old man who would soon retire, he did so, but soon found that he had been deceived, for another doctor had reached the place before him, and taken all the old man's patients. Albert came back to see me in Paris from time to time and I saw that he was terribly worried.

"He gave me enough to pay the nurse for our little girl—and that was all he could do. He earned scarcely enough for himself in Picardie. But I went on working and we lived in the hope of better times.

"Albert was so good, so honest! 'My poor Louise,' he would often say, 'as soon as the future looks a bit brighter and I have a few hundred francs we shall be married.'

"Then, unfortunately, a paid position was offered him on one of the steamers which go to South America. He accepted in order to have an assured income—at most he would lose only two or three years.

"On the first voyage he died of yellow fever at Rio de Janeiro.

"Then I was left all alone in my grief and the nurse sent my child to me last May, just at the beginning of the dull season.

"Oh, what a frightful summer I had, watching my little one fade for lack of proper nourishment!

"My friends and neighbors said to me—'If I were in your place, I would know how to make a good living; it would be an easy matter for a woman who is as attractive as you are—but I could not make up my mind to lead that sort of a life.'

"I know *une femme à Paris* who has only her poorly paid work to depend upon usually ends that way, but the possibility terrified me, and I preferred to suffer and toil and remain true to Albert's memory."

Louise Rameau stopped for a moment choked by suppressed emotion. As he listened to her story the man who sat opposite her covered his eyes with his hands as if to shut out the strong light which annoyed him. The heartrending story reminded him of another poor girl who too had lived alone,

and had a child to care for. He was thinking of Perrinette.

“Je vous demande pardon, monsieur,” said Louise Rameau, with an heroic effort at self-control, “pardon my boring you with my life history, but I do not want you to think that I am a totally depraved woman.”

Keeping his eyes covered with one hand, Monsieur Lescuyer gave the young woman a sign of encouragement with the other. In a pitiful voice he said to her:

“Go on, my poor child—I am convinced that you are sincere and I am listening to you with all compassion and sympathy.”

“Time went on,” continued the girl bravely. “By ceaseless effort I found a little work here and there and I earned just enough to keep my little girl and myself from want.

“About the end of August times picked up a bit and my old employer gave me a piece of embroidery to do at home. The material was very beautiful and was worth at least sixty francs.

“One evening when I had almost finished the embroidery and was to take it to the shop next day to

get fifteen francs for what I had done, I was quietly working at it when my baby, who slept near me in her little crib, woke up with a start and began to cry. In getting up quickly I pushed the table, my lamp upset and—the oil spilled over the silk.

“That was a blow—now it was I, who owed the employer three louis and I had but twenty sous in my pocketbook.

“As I rocked the little one to sleep I became furious. Ah! it was always like that—very well then, so much the worse, I would earn my living as the others did—twenty francs—at once.

“When my little Clémence was asleep, I dressed myself and went out.

“My dress—the one I have on now—mon Dieu, was not so faded then, nor was my hat and I had a pair of gloves too. I did not look as shabby as I do now.

“Very near my home, opposite the Gare de l’Est, is a large café. I had often seen women in gaudy clothes and feathered hats sitting there. I went there too. All of a sudden I was horrified, the women about me were screaming and swearing.

“I was about to get up and run away when a

young man at the next table, whom I had not seen before, came over to me and said: 'May I speak to you?' I was so frightened I could not answer. 'I am not well dressed,' he said, 'but have no fear—I have a pocketful of money,' he said. And then I noticed his poor clothes.

"'Shall I prove it to you?' he continued.

"He took a handful of money out of his pocket—forgive me, sir, it is a very ugly story that I am about to tell you—

"I was desperate and that accident to the embroidery had pushed me to the end of my rope. When I told the young man that I would go to his home with him, he said:

"'Impossible.'

"Then, after hesitating a moment, he said:

"'I live with my parents, can't we go to your house?'

"To my house—O God—in my room where my innocent little baby lay asleep?—But misery had driven me mad—I had come there to offer myself for sale—and sell myself I would.

"He got up and offered me his arm and I saw that he was lame—my place in the Rue des Vinai-

griers was only a few steps from there. We walked on without a word. Once he said to me:

“ ‘We are not very talkative.’

“From time to time he looked at me and his deep black eyes and heavy brows frightened me terribly.

“I mounted the first flight of stairs and when he entered my room behind me, I instinctively put my finger to my mouth.

“ ‘Sh!’ I said, showing him the crib.

“He looked at it sulkily and then said:

“ ‘Bah—babies sleep soundly.’ He threw his hat on the table.

“Then—then I realized—oh! monsieur, how ashamed I was—near my baby’s crib—it was impossible—altogether impossible—my heart was breaking—I began to weep hysterically and asked the young man to leave me—to forgive me for having encouraged him, and begged him to go back to the café where he would find many other women much more attractive than I.

“Then he, instead of being angry with me, asked me why I had changed so suddenly—why I wept so uncontrollably? And when he spoke kindly, despite

his sombre looks, I had confidence and told him all.

"I showed him the ruined embroidery—told him I had never led a depraved life and had given way to temptation for the first time that night only for my baby's sake.

"He listened quietly, his head lowered, his eyes fixed on the crib, and when I finished he put his hand into his pocket, pulled out a number of gold pieces, and throwing them on the table, said in a whisper:

"'When I was a child—I too had a mother who loved me.'

"I was overcome—I could not believe my eyes—could not even say 'Thank you.' But when he took up his hat to go away I was so grateful I seized hold of his hand to kiss it, but he pulled it away violently, hid it under his vest and cried out:

"'My hand—mon Dieu—you want to kiss my hand—if you only knew—'

"He stopped short, alarmed by what he was about to say, looked at me for a moment—Oh! what a look it was, so sad, so awful—then he left.

"That minute is as clearly stamped on my mind as that frightful hour of which I told you. I can



Clarence
Rowe

"WHEN I WAS A CHILD, I TOO HAD A MOTHER WHO LOVED ME."

still see the door violently closed and I can hear his limping foot-fall growing fainter and fainter."

While Louise Rameau told this painful dramatic story, Monsieur Lescuyer sat bowed down, his elbows on his knees, his face buried in his hands. He was consumed with remorse and shame.

This Christian Forgeat, this vagabond, this criminal had done for the woman whom he had met but once and for that child whom he did not know, that which he a rich young man from a good home, brought up with a sense of honor, had refused to do for her who had given up two of the best years of her life to him. This thief and murderer, who was his son, had shown finer sensibilities than he.

"The next day," continued Louise Rameau, "I went to pay for the silk I had spoiled and I bought a few little things which the baby and I needed badly. I had almost two hundred francs left that meant a small fortune for me. How I would always bless that unknown young man, who had been so generous!"

"But on the following day when my neighbors told me of the awful crime on the Rue Cadet—that

was all that was being talked about everywhere—I bought the *Petit Journal* and read a description of the criminal—the lame foot, the heavy dark eyebrows. Recalling these and remembering how he had pulled away his hand when I wanted to kiss it, I was sure that the ‘unknown generous young man’ was the assassin.

“A man, miserably clad and with a pocketful of gold—yes, generous like a thief—there was no doubt in my mind.

“That thought had an awful effect on me, as you can imagine. I had a horror for that money which he had given me. I felt that I would always have blood on my fingers for touching it, and without a moment’s thought of what I was doing, I ran to the nearest church—to Saint Laurent—and threw it all into the poor box.

“I could think of nothing but this Forfeat. In my sleep I had nightmares in which I saw the whole crime, as I had read of it.

“After a few days I became calm, and the recollection of that man seemed less terrible to me. He had pitied me. I told myself that I was unjust, and that he had done something which very few men

would have done. How many encouraged by a girl of the street (for I acted as though I were one) seeing her suddenly burst into tears and beg him to go away, would have believed her story and left her, when she asked him to go?

"He had listened to me quietly, believed that I was telling the truth and helped me as best he could—and I told myself that no matter what crimes he had committed, I was grateful for what he had done for me, and even if everyone spoke of him as a villain, and hated and condemned him, I would try to think kindly of him for what he had done for me.

"And then as I read in the papers of Christian Forgeat's trial and thought of the law and police all set against him, even though they had found in his past that he never had a chance, I felt that it was my duty to tell of his goodness to me. Perhaps on that account the judges might be more lenient!

"I knew I would have to tell frankly of the most shameful hour of my life, but there was no other way to prove my story.

"And that is why, monsieur, I told the judge of my meeting with Christian Forgeat—that is why, when you appealed to me in his name, I came to you

willingly and told you my whole story. I am ready to repeat it in the Supreme Court if it will do him any good.

"I am only a poor girl, but my heart tells me I must do this. I do not want to think of him as a criminal but as an unfortunate, and it seems only right to me that when everyone insists that he is a scoundrel, which may be true, there should be someone in the world to say that once in his life he did one good deed."

Louise stopped—she had told all. In a minute the sad little woman saw the old man arise and come to her with his arms open. His face was tear-stained and he sobbed convulsively as he took her hands, drew her toward him and tenderly kissed her on the forehead.

"*Mon enfant, mon pauvre enfant,*" he said in his sobbing voice. "I want you to know that from today on I shall look out for you and your little girl. You will know misery no longer.

"There is a man to whom you have shown a light and to whom you have pointed out his duty, a man whose pride is completely broken and who, like you, will never again in his lifetime obey any other im-

pulse than the dictates of his own heart. To save that unfortunate criminal, he will confess his own sin and exhibit his own shame."

CHAPTER XIX

THE TRIAL

UNDER the light of the gas jets at the Supreme Court is a suffering bleeding Christ placed in the severe wainscoting. This wan body, whose every muscle is tense with sorrow, does not open his arms to bless and forgive. From his torn hands and feet, and the gory wound in his side, there issues no mystic outpouring of consolation. The criminal on trial may be as innocent as was He—who knows? Yet he can think of but one thing as he looks upon that tragic pitiable image—that on the morrow he, too, may be condemned to die. The artist who conceived that sombre picture did not understand the hope of divine absolution and innocence regained, nor did he have faith in the everlasting happiness promised to "*le plus coupable des coupables.*"

Why then was this statue in the court room? If justice does not exist in this world, does not this reminder of the most cruel of all injustices seem an extreme irony? And if it were placed there to keep

alive in the minds of the judges the fact that they are subject to error, that theirs is the most exacting of all callings, why then is this symbol placed behind them?

Three men were seated under the statue.

In the centre sat the president, a corpulent old man with a heavy face. His head was entirely bald —the only hair on his face was his gray shaggy eyebrows. On his thick sensual lips a jeering smile played constantly. He was Judge Durousseau, famous for his “bon mots” and jokes for the benefit of the spectators, but at the expense of the prisoner with whose head he played as a large lazy cat with a ball of worsted. He was very fashionable, a thorough man of the world, seen at all the opening performances, and dining in the hotels every night.

In the press he was invariably referred to as “*une figure essentiellement parisienne.*”

When he presided there were always places reserved for fashionable women and actresses. A friend of his on the vaudeville stage had once said:

“Durousseau is the only president who makes money.”

However, he was an excellent jurisconsult, a

patron of art and an intelligent collector of medals, yet above all he was a “galant” and would have been astonished to hear that he was cruel in his facetious examination of a miserable wretch whom he was about to sentence either to a long term or to the gallows.

The facial expressions of the two assistant judges were most unattractive. The one to the right was bald, very thin, and had a black pointed beard. He looked thoroughly disagreeable, his brow being wrinkled as if from an everlasting headache. The one to the left was an old blond as red as a small rosy apple. He was constantly rolling his blue myopic eyes.

These three personages lolling lazily in their arm chairs, with their red cuffs spread out on the table, seemed bored by lack of interest and fatigue.

The case of the Rue Cadet, whose argument had now been going on for two days in the highest court, was not fulfilling its promise of intense dramatic interest, the hearing of the previous day greatly disappointing the ladies and noted Parisians who had come there expecting to be aroused to a high emotional pitch. The accusation, which seemed

interminable as it was read by the clerk in a sleepy monotonous voice, only served to rehearse the facts which the papers had presented in twenty or more accounts. Even the cross examination of the prisoner was not brilliant. And above all the personality of Christian Forgeat was a great disappointment. As an assassin capable of committing a crime almost in the open streets of Paris, the public was prepared to see a man who was a terrible bandit, a free savage in the midst of civilization. The pale lame man of unattractive appearance and modest attitude, who confessed his crime with sincere repentance, denying only any premeditation, and who seemed doomed from the first, was indeed an uninteresting specimen of the reckless criminal. His pitiful childhood, his good behavior at the colony, his years of misery and vagabondage—all this was absolutely insignificant and tame.

"He is trying to make a romance of *that*," said Mademoiselle Lamour of the Variétés disdainfully.

The women of the world, whose morbid curiosity had led them to come to the trial, began to yawn.

"The president certainly fooled us when he promised an interesting afternoon. Bah! the criminal is

as vulgar as can be—we would have done better to go to the Water Color Society to-day."

Realizing that his audience was cold and bored, Monsieur Durousseau began to amuse them a bit with his wit. In his questioning of Forgeat, from whom he wrung the story of the murder in short phrases, *Monsieur le Président* found opportunity to make two puns, which, however, did not meet with their usual success.

The entire audience was *ennuyé*, and the vaudeville actress expressed the popular opinion when she said:

"Poor Durousseau—this is really a mess."

The second day was equally disappointing, and even the desire to hear the cross examination of *Monsieur l'avocat général Lescuyer* and the defense of Péchaud had attracted only a very limited number of the curious.

To-day there were no outer barristers in their flowing robes politely conducting the invited guests to their reserved seats. There was only "a half-filled house," as one says of the theatre, and the president who saw only reporters, lawyers and court

officials in the room, was consequently in a very bad humor. Seated between his two sleepy assistants, he conducted the case phlegmatically, as he listened to the evidence which was but a repetition of what had been said over and over again. He did not even take the trouble to hector the witnesses as was his wont.

However, since the beginning of the trial, all the habitués of the Palais had been struck with the expression and attitude of Monsieur Lescuyer. Seated in his place to the left of the judges he, as public prosecutor, had not once interrupted the proceedings with the customary, "I object." His face, at no time cheerful, had never worn so sad and set an expression. His eyes were lowered and he seemed lost in deep meditation, completely unaware of what was going on about him.

"What is the trouble with Monsieur Lescuyer?" whispered a young lawyer to the senior member of his firm. "Of course he is never very jolly, but look at him to-day—he is gloomy enough to scare one. It seems strange—since the beginning of this trial he hasn't said a word, has scarcely raised his eyes. Do you think he is ill?"

The senior member, Monsieur Begasse (reputed to have the most caustic tongue in Paris, and therefore to be the lawyer whom one would engage when he cared less for winning the case than for humiliating his opponent) sneered silently.

"My dear boy, this uninteresting case has put him to sleep and anyway he is to be nominated as judge next month, and I suppose he thinks he needn't bother with these duties any longer. See, he is changing his position."

It was true. Monsieur Lescuyer trembled and raised his eyes as the judge said:

"The testimony of Louise Rameau will now be taken."

She entered, quietly dressed in black—for a charitable hand had taken her from her old miserable quarters and given her some necessary funds. Timid and thoroughly alarmed by the imposing solemnity of justice, but confident in her own desire and resolution to pay her debt to Christian Forgeat, if possible, she ascended the witness stand.

Very simply and in a trembling voice which vibrated with the accent of truth, she told how the murderer but a few minutes after his crime had been

generous and considerate to a woman in tears and to a child in its cradle.

When Louise Rameau took the stand, the accused seated between two soldiers looked at her with amazement. At first he did not recognize her. Since early morning he had listened to the testimony of his acquaintances of the *basse boheme* which had done his case more harm than good. These witnesses were actuated by a desire to help a friend who was down, but most of them only succeeded in prejudicing the judge against him.

"What was this woman about to do now," he wondered.

"Where had she been found?

"What would she say against him?

"The same story no doubt, that he was a vagabond who had never had steady employment. Alas! the judges knew that only too well."

After the two long hearings, the unfortunate man was tired, completely exhausted, and awaited impatiently the pronouncing of the verdict.

"What is the use of this new witness, this unknown woman?"

He was lost, he knew it. No one could give the necessary evidence that he had entered Soldmayer's shop without criminal intent, that he had killed him in a sudden uncontrollable rage.

He had repeated it ten times but no one had believed him, and when he wanted to raise his hand to swear that he was uttering the absolute truth, the president had been very angry with him and made some sarcastic remarks on the subject of honor.

If only the verdict were soon read—death—that was the simplest and quickest way, and all that this woman might say could have no effect.

But with her first words Christian Forgeat recognized the poor young woman, and as he listened to her speaking so frankly and bravely of what must have been exquisite torture to her, and pleading with the judges to take note of his goodness, his despair was mitigated, and burying his face in his hands he began to weep quietly. In all the world he had one friend, one human being there was who would make a sacrifice for him.

The attorney general in his place as State's evidence summoned up all his moral courage and tried to control the sobs which were consuming him. This

man, filled with remorse and sorrow stricken, who had sworn to do a mighty act and who was in a moment to expose his life's secret and renounce his profession—he, who was to bring upon himself a supernal punishment to save a criminal, was living the most crushing hour of his life, yet he was overwhelmed for the moment with a deep consoling emotion. Oh! what happiness was his!—for this Christian Forgeat, his own son, fallen so low, was not a villain at heart, his soul was not dead, if he understood and felt the generosity of that humble woman, and wept at her act of courage and heroism.

The testimony of Louise Rameau made a great impression on the audience. When she explained how she had come to know the accused and how she had taken him to her home, the president felt that the subject was fitting for one of his flashes of humor. But old Péchaud, who pled the defense of Forgeat, lowering his white head and interrupting with a few fatherly words to Louise, asked her to continue her touching story.

When she had finished, even the jovial Durousseau felt the indelicacy of his joke—there was a movement among the jurors who thus far had sat

like statues, and two of them wiped the tears from their eyes.

Nevertheless the incident, pathetic as it was, did not change the issue or prove lack of premeditation, and its power to save the culprit was doubtful. He had answered the cross examination quietly and had expressed his repentance sincerely without a desire for effect in word or look. But it was quite improbable that the jury would disregard the very important matter of premeditation, despite the masterly plea of Péchaud.

"What outcome do you predict, Monsieur Begasse?" asked the young lawyer.

"Hm," answered the old stager, "Péchaud will try some of his melodrama and play on our sympathies. The accused has no previous bad record except his commitment to the Colony, which should really count as an extenuating circumstance. Who knows?—it may happen that he will escape the gallows. However, it was clearly a case of murder following theft and the 'gentlemen' of the jury generally pronounce but the one verdict for that, you know. Look at that gross looking apoplectic, the third man on the second row. He's one who will

be a good barometer—let's watch him. If Péchaud draws a tear from that phlegmatic old creature, and I'll admit he's capable of it, Forgeat might get twenty years at hard labor. But I repeat, murder followed by theft, that's very serious.

"But Lescuyer, who is usually very severe—won't he undo Péchaud's effect?"

"I really don't know—in this case it all depends on the attorney general. There—Lescuyer is rising now."

CHAPTER XX

THE VERDICT

MONSIEUR LESCUYER arose; his head was unshaken, his body rigid—he was indeed an awful figure, tremendous and appalling. He knit his heavy brows in a more forbidding way than usual, and with the gesture used by many orators when they begin their discourse, he seemed to rest his entire weight on his hands, which lay passive on the desk before him.

With an heroic effort he conquered the tremor in his voice and began:

“Gentlemen of the Jury,

“Gentlemen of the Court,

“The charge of an attorney general has seldom been a simpler matter than in the case before us to-day. On his own confession the accused killed another man and stole his money. However, he protests, despite all circumstantial evidence to the contrary, that he had not planned the crime in advance and that he succumbed to the irresistible temp-

tation of the moment, though I am convinced that you do not believe him. Yet the pathetic testimony to which you have just listened seems to show that all the impulses for good have not been blotted out of the obscure soul of Christian Forgeat. We might cite in his favor his miserable childhood, also the fact that he was exposed to a most corrupting atmosphere at the *Colonie du Plateau*, and above all that during several years of misery since his release he resisted all temptation.

"In a few moments the worthy lawyer for the defense will lay stress on these extenuating conditions in order to arouse your sympathy, but I shall make my appeal to your sense of justice. My duty is to see and to know but one thing, that the accused man is a thief and an assassin. In the name of respect for all propriety, which is the only protection by means of which humanity lives in peace, and in the name of that respect which is even more sacred—the regard for life itself—there is only one course open to me as attorney general, and that is to tell you, gentlemen of the jury, that you must condemn the man; and you, your Honor, the Judge, that you must carry out the punishment.

"During a long career I have fulfilled this duty with absolute clearness of conscience, and I have never arisen from this chair without being unmistakably convinced that my words, no matter how severe, were uttered for the benefit of humanity and the defense of society. Whenever I was certain of the guilt of the accused I have always unhesitatingly demanded that he expiate his sin according to all the rigor of the law.

"But to-day you see before you a very miserable man, whose conscience is tortured by doubt, whose heart is torn by remorse—a man who does not feel called upon to denounce the criminal, but who instead implores your pity for himself."

• • • • • • • •

At this extraordinary declaration the audience looked aghast, then cried almost as a single man:

"What a scandal!—the world is upset."

Monsieur Durousseau, completely nonplussed, thought it his cue to introduce one of his jokes, but the matter was a bit too serious for him; he did not have the proper material for a pun, and could only stammer:

"Those are strange words, monsieur attorney general, I must ask you to explain."

Monsieur Lescuyer extended one hand toward the old man.

"Everyone will understand in a few moments," he answered with gentleness and authority; "you will understand and you will forgive my present conduct and speech, I am sure, for I am acting in obedience to the highest prompting of morality. By to-morrow I shall have cast off this robe and all that it means, and if I have not done so before and taken my place with the defense to beseech your mercy for the accused, it is only because honor and nature have impelled me to remain here one day longer and make the last use of my position.

"Be prepared, you who fear a scandal. That which I am about to do happens very seldom and yet I feel confident that not one person among you, officers of this Court of Justice, nor one of you, honest gentlemen of the jury, will reproach me.

"And now," cried the attorney general, "look well at the criminal on the bench of infamy, and—look closely at me, who am called upon to demand his life. That man—and I have known it only since

the hand of justice has been raised against him—that culprit is the son of a young woman whom I abandoned like a coward; he is the son whom my sense of honor exposed to a life of misery and crime. Christian Forgeat, the accused, is *my own son*—”

The audience was in an uproar, but in obedience to the imperious command of Monsieur Lescuyer, the members of the Court, the judges, their assistants and the jurors looked at the face of Lescuyer, then at Forgeat, and realized the striking resemblance, which no one had noted before. Their outcry was simultaneous.

The prisoner unconsciously moved to the right. The two soldiers held him firmly by the arm, but he lurched as far forward as possible, his eyes dilating with terror, and gazing fixedly at the man who had made the astounding revelation—at his own father.

As for the president, he was bewildered. What should he do? Should he suspend the proceedings? He had a vague intention of doing so. He half arose from his chair and tried to frame a fitting sentence.

"Monsieur l'avocat général seems indisposed," he said.

But Lescuyer interrupted him with a sovereign gesture.

"No, monsieur le Président, do not think that I have become mad. Do as the others in the court have done—look well at that man and then at me and form your own conclusion."

"His mother's name was Forgeat—and Christian Forgeat, the thief and murderer, is the son of Christian Lescuyer, the attorney general of Paris. A young girl-mother abandoned by her lover, a child; who did not ask to be born, left to chance by his own father—that is a crime of which the law takes no account. But I, who am guilty of that sin, and who am to-day cruelly suffering from its consequences, I recognize that this is a terrible crime, and I wish to expiate it, to punish myself and to be an example to others as guilty as I who live in impunity. The public confession which I have made is not sufficient restitution."

"From this hour I acknowledge Christian Forgeat as my son. If you sentence him to death I shall be the father of a man who died on the gallows; if you

send him to prison, I shall be the father of a convict. I am the cause of his shame. I recognize my share in the outcome of his life; I consider myself responsible for the miserable influences which shaped his character; and I confess that my honor and my life are sullied. All that he has suffered, all that he has done, is the result of my sin.

"While I forgot my cowardly sin, prompted by self-love, and kept on ascending the social heights with ever increasing respect and honor, this poor child, my child, lost his mother, became a street Arab, was sent to a school of correction, and on his release sank to the depths as a consequence of exposure to misery and hunger.

"Who left him to chance and deprived him of all moral cultivation?

"I!

"Who denied him the lessons and noble example he needed?

"I!

"It was I, always I.

"It is because I shirked the simplest duty, because I did not obey the most elementary instincts, that Christian Forgeat has been a vagabond, a convict,

a suspected stigmatized being all his life—and at last has become a criminal.

"These dreadful realities! Oh, how they have burned themselves into my conscience since the day I learned of the crime and of the existence of my son!"

"I listened and bowed to the judgment of the Mighty Power, when He showed me how miserable and heartless a father I had been. He is guiding me in this hour to disregard Law and to obey Nature, when I plead for mercy instead of demanding the pound of flesh, when I am trying to wipe away with my Judge's robe the blood spilled by the murderer, when I confess my remorse and punishment and declare:

"I am the guilty man!"

Convulsed with sobs, with his two hands twitching on his breast, Christian Lescuyer stopped speaking.

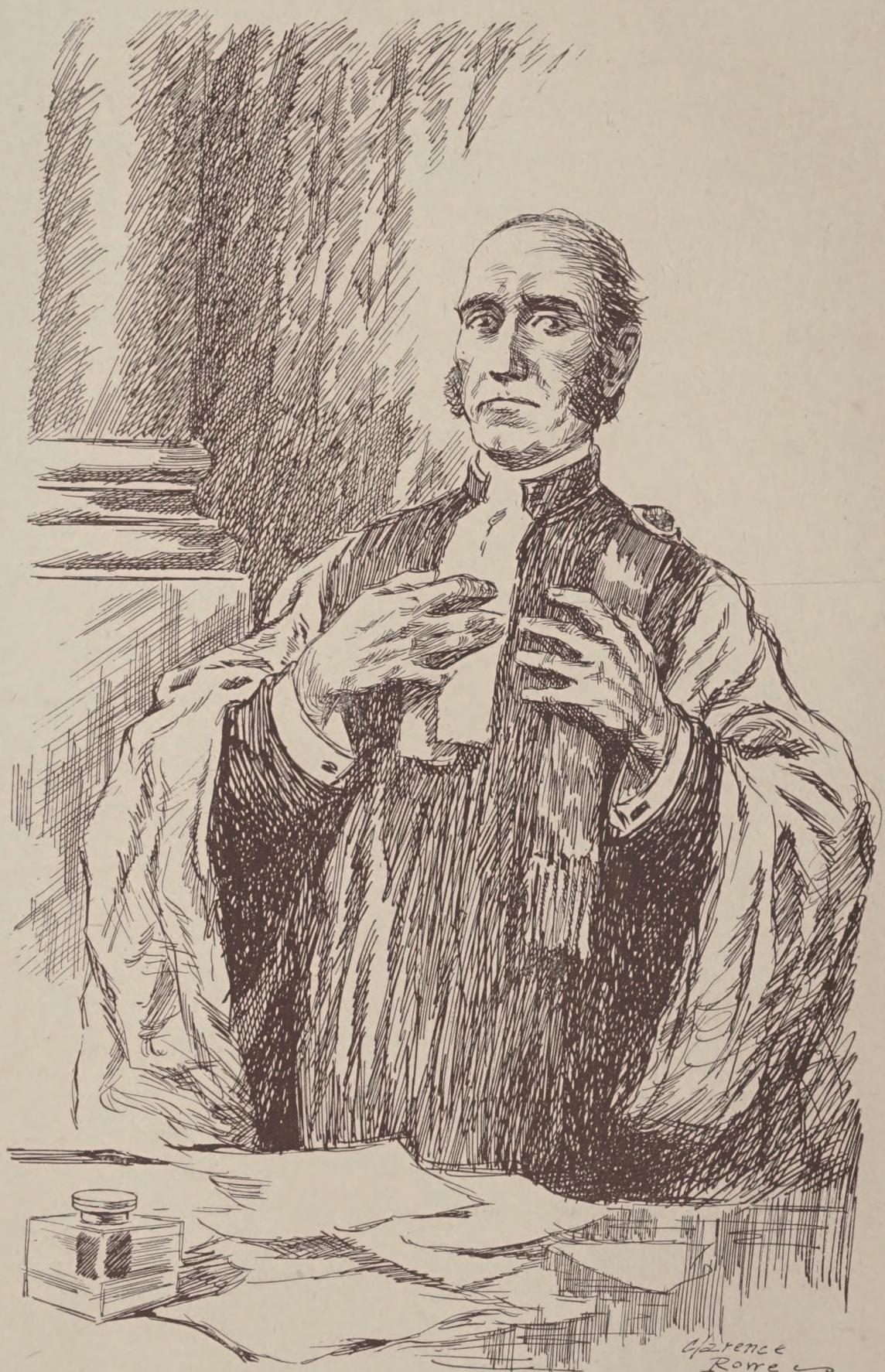
Now the assemblage was silent, stilled with awe, and even the president, subdued by the sadly terrible eloquence, had no thought of interrupting the confession.

The criminal, his head bowed, was quietly weeping.

"Have mercy, gentlemen of the jury," said Monsieur Lescuyer with a supreme effort; "will you have pity on the father and the son? Do you think—ah! because of your emotion I dare to hope—do you believe that the hour has come when you can condemn the injustice of the Code which does not punish the father of an illegitimate child who enrolls the accursed little soul in the army of evil?

"These laws, these cruel laws—fool and culprit that I am!—I have spent my life in believing that they were necessary and just, and in enforcing them to the very letter. To-day I know only how to repent, to implore, to beseech. I can only promise that, if you entrust this unfortunate, ensanguined lad to my care, I shall watch over him, regenerate him and tend the small flicker of goodness and honor which still burns in his darkened soul. I can only point to the image of the Christ whose divine word assuaged hearts full of anger and vengeance and made hands drop the stones with which they were about to assault a weak fellow creature.

"On the last occasion that I occupy this chair I am not here to accuse, gentlemen of the jury, but to beg for mercy. Mercy for the unfortunate boy—



"HAVE MERCY, GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, I AM THE GUILTY MAN."

mercy for me! I ask it of you in the name of the thought for which He died, and which will sooner or later heal all the sorrows of the human family—the sublime thought of pity and love, which teaches that forgiveness is the highest type of justice."

.

He stopped. An emotion of silence, but pregnant with anguish and subdued sobbing, gripped his listeners. And the two culprits, father and son, the judge and the judged, one in his place of honor, the other in his place of shame, both overcome and covering their tear-stained faces, stood in the same attitude, made the same gesture of despair.

The president, a man not bad at heart despite his usual lack of sympathy, was overwhelmed, and for the first time realized the cruelty of his usual levity. Nevertheless he reproached himself severely for not having had the courage to interrupt the confession of Monsieur Lescuyer. The public confession displeased him greatly. Could he permit an attorney general, despite convincing proof and the undeniable confession of the accused, to disregard his duty? What would be the opinion of the other courts, the press, the public? How would his own

attitude be interpreted? How would his conduct in this case be judged? Would he not be accused of lacking presence of mind and firmness? And yet he was truly sorry for his colleague and desired to reach as kind a decision as possible.

He knew that above all he must gain time.

"After the unexpected turn in the proceedings," he said hesitatingly, "the Court considers it fitting and proper that judgment be postponed, and that we adjourn to the President's private office to decide whether or not another trial will be necessary."

But Monsieur Péchaud arose and claimed the right to speak. The old lawyer, who understood at last the insistence of his friend Lescuyer that he plead the defense, saw the danger of giving the burning emotion of the audience a chance to cool.

In the broad simple manner which gave so much authority to his address, he knew how to intimidate the Court. He did not think this the time to adjourn without a breach of custom which he considered exceedingly serious, and if such should be the case he would protest.

The lawyer for the defense had his inalienable and absolute rights, and in the present instance it was

because the new evidence was in favor of the accused that according to all precedents he claimed his privilege.

The president, who was not at all angry that this loophole was offered him, granted the request under the existing conditions and permitted the plea to be made.

But the capable man was wary in the choice of his words. He rehearsed the well known facts of the case, the murder of Soldmayer and the blood-stained pawn ticket—for the crime had been almost lost sight of and swamped, so to speak, by the heart-rending confession made by the culprit's father.

When Monsieur Péchaud resumed, the jurors were still upset by the heroic action of M. Lescuyer. To keep them keyed up to that pitch and not allow their emotion to be dissipated, the old lawyer did not display the wonderful eloquence of which he was master, but, preferring to have his friend's impression remain the stronger, applied himself to drawing a pathetic picture of the life of this pariah of a son, and of the heroic repentance of the father, concluding briefly with an appeal for mercy.

The battle was won! The jury after a short

deliberation rendered the verdict:—"Not guilty! Christian Forgeat is acquitted!"

.

When the young man, aroused by his guards, heard the president read the sentence of acquittal and order that immediate freedom be given him, he was dazed and staggered. He looked dumbfounded at the man wearing the court insignia, the attorney general, who was his father and had saved his life.

It must be a dream! The jury had shown *him* clemency? The court had not enforced its punishment?

From the very depths of his being he cried out:
"It is true! I am free!"

Several minutes later, as he left the recorder's office, where he had been sent to fill out several blanks for the jail book, he entered the court room again. It was almost deserted at this late hour but he saw his savior coming toward him. The attorney general had taken off his cap and gown for the last time and was awaiting the departure of the freed prisoner. Instinctively, as he caught sight of him, Christian Forgeat drew back in confusion. Then



Clarence
Rome ↵

"HENCEFORWARD, MY SON, YOU BELONG TO YOUR FATHER."

Monsieur Lescuyer placed his two hands on the boy's shoulders.

"No, my son," he said, "no, you are not free to go where you like. What use would you make of a liberty which would only lead you into evil ways? Henceforth you belong to your father, to a father who did not do his duty by you, but who hopes now to make up for the neglect of all these years. Yes, you belong to me, you will be your father's prisoner. I shall never mention the past. To help you retrace your footsteps and walk toward the right, I shall be your guide, and whenever your sorrow seems too hard to bear, I shall open my arms to my poor boy as I did to-day."

In the large room stood an old court official waiting to turn out the lights. He had been a gendarme, unsympathetic and with a great respect for the magistracy. For lack of something better to do he had attended the first trial of Christian Forgeat and had just learned of his acquittal without any details. Of course he was not in favor of such a result and asked how in the world the jury could have rendered so absurd a verdict.

He grew impatient as he watched the two men in

earnest conversation and thought that their delay would make him eat cold soup for his supper. As he approached them the man's respect for those in authority received a shock at the sight of the dignified Monsieur Lescuyer clasping the sobbing assassin to his heart.

CHAPTER XXI

EXPIATION

A GIGANTIC steamer, bound for southern ports, was slowly sailing up the harbor of Havre. Despite the mist and the winter fog, the names of the cities of the Pacific—Valparaiso, Santiago, Arequipa and Guayaquil (which sound like the cries of parrots)—had attracted a large number of travellers. It was the moment of departure, always a solemn one when the moods of the mighty ocean are taken into consideration. The two enormous smokestacks poured out a thick black cloud which obscured the surrounding masts.

The captain (wearing his seaman's cap, with his hands in the pockets of his heavy overcoat, which reached his boots) stood watching the farewell embraces and ready to help those who were about to step off before the last whistle sounded.

Presently the gangplank was withdrawn and the helmsman in his oilskin suit was on the ladder

awaiting only a sign to order the great machinery to be put into motion.

At regular intervals the shrill siren shrieked.
The boat was off!

.

Because of the disagreeable weather the captain's bridge was deserted, only four passengers standing there, while the others were on the deck waving their goodbyes and throwing kisses to the dear ones they were leaving.

Who are these four people who are standing alone and not taking part in the farewells? First of all, the man standing near the balustrade is the attorney general, Christian Lescuyer, who is leaving his native France forever, and not far from him, seated on the bench are Christian Forgeat, his son, and Louise Rameau, with her little daughter on her lap.

Monsieur Lescuyer looks affectionately at the three young people whom he has adopted and with whom he is exiling himself. They constitute his family.

The man, whose nature has been transformed by

sorrow and love, has a fatherly affection for all three and his one desire is to make their lives happy. He is willing to go anywhere with them where far from all reminders of their unfortunate youth, they can forget the past and begin a new existence.

Christian Lescuyer had reached that decision the day following his son's acquittal. The entire judiciary had looked with disfavor upon the verdict in the Forgeat case as clearly the result of excited and sympathetic emotion and against all the established tenets of justice. The attorney general received no compassion from his colleagues, and when he submitted his resignation, it was accepted with a stiffness which did not surprise him, but which showed him clearly what he might expect in future from society, three-fourths of which is composed of hypocrites and pharisees.

Only Donadieu and his good wife came to Lescuyer at once and told him of their admiration and approval. But even they did not dare to ask him how he intended to give up his life to his son.

Lescuyer was sure that his son would never be received where his story was known, so there was but one solution of the problem—to leave France.

perhaps the land where they had known nothing but suffering. The little girl on Louise's lap placed one of her hands in that of Christian Forgeat, who smiled at the mother and the child. These three would console, strengthen and love one another.

The steamer, which makes very good time, has passed the bank of the semaphore and is being violently rocked by the first ground swell. The wind is high, the sea gulls pass and repass in their rapid flight. The boat rocks and tosses up the gray foam over its decks. Away up in the clouds there are one, two, three little blue islands, then more and more are visible.

The fine weather has set in. The fog is lifting. At last all the little clouds have vanished, the sun is shining brilliantly. The waves are green and the billows scatter in silver ripples. The boat, carrying the emigrants, rolls and pitches in its unswerving course and goes forward, glowing and active, on the cheerful sea of hope.

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